

A Demographic and
Socioeconomic Profile of the
Dominican Population in Spain:
2001-2024

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Index

Section	Page
Summary of Findings -----	1
Introduction -----	8
I. The Dominican Population in Spain -----	9
II. Migration from the Dominican Republic to Spain -----	11
III. Demographic Characteristics of Dominican Immigrants in Spain -----	14
Geographical Distribution -----	14
Naturalization Rates -----	16
Composition of the Population by Sex -----	18
Age Distribution -----	20
Household Structure -----	21
IV. The Labor Market and the Dominican Immigrant Population -----	22
Labor Force Participation Rates -----	22
Unemployment -----	25
Occupations -----	29
Salaries -----	34
V. Educational Attainment of Dominican Immigrants -----	35
VI. Poverty among Dominican Immigrants -----	43
VII. Dominicans Born in Spain -----	46
VIII. Conclusions -----	52
References -----	56

Summary of Findings

This research report presents a comprehensive analysis of the current demographics and socioeconomic status of the Dominican population in Spain and its evolution during the last thirty years. Using information provided by Spain's National Institute of Statistics (INE), especially Spain's Censuses of Population and Housing, the study has the following conclusions.

Population Dynamics

(1) It is estimated that the number of Dominicans residing in Spain was equal to 269,356 in 2024. This includes 201,162 persons who were born in the Dominican Republic as well as an estimated 68,194 persons who were born in Spain and had one or both parents born in the Dominican Republic. This estimate considers the Dominican population in Spain as an ethnic group which includes not only immigrants but also their children, who generally tend to identify with the ethnicity of their parents even when they also adopt Spanish nationality as their main identity.

(2) The Dominican population in Spain is the second largest among the Dominican diasporas in the world, following the United States, whose Dominican population is estimated to be over two million. The third largest Dominican population outside the Dominican Republic is in Puerto Rico, estimated to be about one hundred thousand.

(3) The Dominican population in Spain has skyrocketed, spearheaded by the substantial influx of immigrants in recent decades. The number of persons born in the Dominican Republic residing in Spain rose from 7,089 in 1990 to 42,860 in 2001, to 119,493 in 2011, and all the way up to 201,162 in 2024. But the number of Dominicans born in Spain has also risen rapidly. We estimate that this population rose from close to five thousand in 2001, to 23,647 in 2011 and 68,194 in 2024.

Dominican Immigrants in Spain: A Demographic Profile

(4) Dominican migration to Spain has risen sharply in recent years. Among Dominican immigrants residing in Spain in 2021, those who migrated to that country during the period of 2016 to 2020 was on average 9,136 per year, compared to 6,669 per year during 2011 to 2015, 7,978 per year in the period of 2001 to 2010, and 1,977 per year between 1991 and 2000.

(5) The Dominican-born population is now the twelfth largest foreign-born population in Spain and constitutes 2.3 percent of all foreign-born persons in the country.

(6) Close to 60 percent of the Dominican-born population in Spain resided in just two Autonomous Communities in 2024: The Community of Madrid (with 34.0 percent) and Catalonia (with 24.3 percent). Far behind were Castilla and León, with 6.1 percent of the Dominican-born population, Andalucía, with 4.9 percent, and Galicia with also 4.9 percent. But there has been a growing geographical dispersion away from the Community of Madrid: in 2001, 43.4 percent of all persons born in the Dominican Republic were residing in the Community of Madrid, declining to 34 percent in 2024.

(7) About 68 percent of Dominican immigrants residing in Spain in 2024 had become Spanish nationals. This is significantly above the average for the overall immigrant population in Spain, whose equivalent percentage was 33.1 percent. But there is significant variation by nationality, from Romanians, who have only a 4 percent rate of naturalization, to Ecuadorians, who have close to 74 percent.

(8) The probability of naturalization rises with the length of time residing in Spain. For instance, the naturalization rate among Dominicans who arrived in Spain more recently, in the period of 2011 to 2020, was only 36.6 percent in 2021, but this rises to 79.8 percent for those who arrived in Spain between 2001 and 2010, and above 90 percent for those who arrived earlier.

(9) There is a significant difference in the naturalization rate by sex: in 2024, 71.7 percent of Dominican women had obtained Spanish nationality compared to 62.3 percent among Dominican men.

(10) A substantial proportion of Dominican immigrants in Spain is female. In 2024, close to 60 percent of all Dominican immigrants in Spain were women, significantly higher than for the overall population in the country, which was 51 percent female. The proportion of women among Dominicans in Madrid and Catalonia was somewhat lower: about 57 percent in both Communities. On the other hand, the proportion of women among Dominican immigrants in Spain has been declining significantly over time, from close to 70 percent in 2001 to about 60 percent in 2024.

(11) The Dominican-born population in Spain is aging. The median age of Dominicans in Spain was 40 years in 2024, which is substantially higher than it was in 2011, when it was 33, and in 2001, when it was 31. The overall population in Spain is also aging, but the median age is much higher in Spain than among Dominicans, equal to 44 years in 2024. These aging trends hold for both men and women, but there is an age gap by sex: in 2023, the median age of Dominican women in Spain was 42 years while it was 37 years for men. This gender age gap also exists in Spain overall, but it is narrower: it was equal to three years in 2024, while for Dominicans it was five years.

(12) The difference in median age between Dominicans and the overall population in Spain is reflected in the percentage of the population 64 years of age or older. Among the Dominican-born population, only 4.6 percent were 64 years of age or older, compared to 19.6 percent in Spain overall. This, of course, reflects the larger proportion of recent immigrants among the Dominican population in Spain, who tend to be relatively young.

(13) The proportion of the Dominican-born population in Spain that is legally married is substantially lower than that among the overall Spanish population. In 2021, 33.1 percent of Dominicans were married as compared to 47.2 percent in Spain overall. The remaining, non-married, categories include persons who are single, divorced, separated, or cohabitating with partners but not married, which in total make 66.9 percent of Dominicans versus 52.8 percent for the overall population in Spain.

(14) In 2021, close to one quarter (25.2 percent) of Dominicans in Spain lived in families consisting of one parent living with children, and over 90 percent of these families were headed by women. The percentage of this type of family in Spain overall was much lower, equal to 15.7 percent. This difference is also reflected in the percentage of Dominicans living in families consisting of a couple with children, which was equal to 36.2 percent in 2021, much lower than that in Spain overall, which was equal to 49.2 percent.

The Labor market and the Dominican immigrant population in Spain

(15) Dominican immigrants have higher labor force participation rates than the overall population of Spain. The participation rate for Dominican immigrants 16 years of age and over was 62.5 percent in 2021 while it was 56 percent for Spain overall. This gap in labor force participation rates has been sustained over the years but is shrinking, spearheaded by an increase in Spain's overall labor force participation (from 52.6 percent in 2001 to 56 percent in 2021) and a reduction among Dominicans (from 69 percent in 2001 to 62.5 percent in 2021).

(16) Dominican immigrants in Spain have greater labor force participation rates than both the Spain-born and overall foreign-born populations in the country. The labor force participation rate for those born in Spain was 55.8 percent in 2021 and it was 56.5 percent for the foreign-born population, compared to 62.5 percent among Dominicans. Even compared to the population born in the European Community (excluding Spain) residing in that country, Dominicans have higher participation rates.

(17) The higher labor force participation rates of Dominican immigrants in Spain hold for both men and women. Among Dominican men 16 years of age or older, the labor force participation in 2021 was 63.4 percent while it was 59.3 percent for the overall male population in Spain. For women, Dominicans

had a 61.8 percent labor force participation rate in 2021, while for the overall female population in Spain it was 53 percent. But Dominican labor force participation rates are declining for both men and women. For men, the drop was from 70.9 percent in 2001 to 63.4 percent in 2021. Among Dominican women, the decline was from 66 percent in 2001 to 61.8 percent in 2021. This pattern of shrinking labor force participation rates holds as well for overall Spain but only for men (whose participation rate declined from 62.8 percent to 59.3 percent) and not for women (whose labor force participation rate went up from 38.7 percent to 53 percent).

(18) The higher labor force participation rates of Dominican immigrants compared to the overall population in Spain is largely explained by the differences in the age composition of the two populations. As noted earlier, the Spanish population has a significantly greater proportion of persons aged 64 or more, and labor force participation rates drop precipitously for the population aged 64 or older. This causes the overall labor force participation in Spain to be lower than among Dominicans. But for the population aged 16 to 64, Dominicans have lower labor force participation rates than the overall Spanish population. In 2021, the labor force participation of Dominicans aged 16 to 64 was 65.1 percent, but it was 71.8 percent for Spain overall.

(19) Dominican immigrants aged 16 and over have an unemployment rate that is substantially higher than that prevailing in Spain overall. In 2021, the unemployment rate among Dominicans aged 16 or older was 28.8 percent, compared to 17 percent for the equivalent population in overall Spain. This greater unemployment rate among the Dominican-born population holds as well in previous years, but it became abysmal in 2011, when the Spanish economy was going through the financial and economic crisis of 2008-2014. In 2011, the Dominican unemployment rate was 48.3 percent compared to 29.6 percent in Spain overall, and both rates were up from what they were back in 2001, when the unemployment rate among Dominicans was 20.1 percent, compared to 14.1 percent for Spain overall.

(20) The substantially higher unemployment among Dominicans partly reflects the fact that both the economic crisis of the early 2010s and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 affected more deeply Dominican workers. And this is explained in turn by the fact that the sectors where Dominican workers are concentrated --the service sector among women and both services and construction for men--were disproportionately impacted by the crises.

(21) The unemployment rate among Dominican women in 2021 was greater than for Dominican men. The unemployment among female workers was 31.5 percent compared to 24.6 percent among men. The economic crisis in the early 2010s, however, impacted Dominican men more deeply than Dominican women, perhaps because a greater proportion of men were employed in the construction industry, a sector that was devastated by the financial and real estate crisis. In 2011, a shocking 58 percent of Dominican men were unemployed while the equivalent for women was 43.6 percent.

(22) Unemployment rates are usually higher for younger populations. Indeed, although the overall unemployment rate among Dominican immigrants 16 years of age and older was 28.8 percent in 2021, the rate for those aged 16 to 19 years was 51.1 percent, compared to an unemployment rate of 33.4 percent among the 20 to 24 population, 29.4 percent for the 25 to 29 age group, and 26.8 percent for those aged 30 to 35. This age-unemployment profile prevailed also --and even more sharply-- among the Spanish workforce in general. For Spain's labor force aged 16 to 19, the unemployment rate was 46.4 percent, but it drops to 25.1 percent for those aged 20 to 24, to 19.4 percent for those aged 25 to 29, and to 16.6 percent for those age 30 to 34. For all age groups, the unemployment rate among Dominicans immigrants exceeds that for Spain overall.

(23) The unemployment rate among Dominican immigrants is higher than that prevailing among the overall foreign-born population of Spain. Among Dominicans, the unemployment rate was 28.8 percent in 2021, as already established, while it was 22.2 percent among the foreign-born population. Both rates, however, are above the one sustained among the native-born population in Spain, which was equal to 16 percent in 2021.

(24) The occupational distribution of Dominican-born workers in Spain differs substantially from that of the overall population. In 2021, as much as 63.8 percent of Dominicans were employed in service occupations while it was close to half as much, 33.3 percent, for Spain overall. The concentration of Dominican workers in services is even more striking for women: 82.4 percent of female Dominicans were employed in service occupations, as opposed to 46 percent for Spanish females overall. Among Dominican men, both service occupations and the set of occupations described as precision production, craft, operators, fabricators, and laborers were major sources of employment, with 43.6 percent in services and 38.7 percent in precision production, craft, operators, fabricators and laborers. These professions did not prevail as much among men in Spain overall.

(25) In terms of specific branches of economic activity, Dominican workers are clustered in (1) the accommodation and food service activities, which account for 26.6% of the Dominican workforce (and only 7.6% in Spain overall), (2) domestic services and other activities offered to households, which employ an additional 11.9% of Dominican employment (and only 2.1% for Spain overall), and (3) administrative and office support activities, where 11.1% of Dominicans are employed (as opposed to 6.6% for Spain overall). On the other hand, Dominicans are underrepresented in manufacturing, where 5.6% are employed (versus 10.7% for Spain overall), and in public sector employment, where only 1% of Dominicans work (compared to 7.1% for Spain overall).

(26) Dominicans have lower rates of self-employment than the overall population of Spain. In 2021, only 9.6% of Dominican men were self-employed (versus 17.5% for Spain overall) and 6.7% of Dominican women were self-employed (as opposed to 11.3% for Spain females overall). On the other hand, Dominicans were over-represented in the household or domestic service sector, where 23.8% of Dominican men and 31.2% of Dominican females were employed, compared to 13.8% and 20.3%, respectively, for overall male and female workers in Spain.

(27) We estimate that Dominican workers on average have significantly lower salaries than the overall Spanish population. In 2021, our estimate is that the average annual gross salary of Dominican workers was €15,653, compared to €25,896 for the overall workforce in Spain. This represents a wide salary gap, with Dominican immigrants receiving 60.4 percent of the average annual salary of workers in overall Spain.

(28) There is also a wide gender gap in salaries. Among Dominican workers, we estimate that in 2021 the average annual earnings among men were €19,589 while the equivalent value for the overall female workforce is €23,296. Dominican women were therefore earning less than 80% of the salaries of men. This gender earnings gap holds as well in Spain in general.

Education

(29) Dominican immigrants have significantly lower educational attainment than the overall population in Spain. The proportion of Dominican immigrants 25 years of age or older whose highest schooling level was higher education (tertiary education) equaled 17.2% in 2021, compared to 29.5% for Spain overall.

(30) Although the average educational attainment of the Dominican-born population in Spain is increasing, it is doing so only very slowly: the percentage of Dominican immigrants 25 years of age or older who had attained higher education rose by only about 2 percentage points between 2011 and 2021 compared to over 9 percentage points for Spain overall.

(31) On average, women have significantly greater educational attainment than men. In 2021, the percentage of Dominican immigrants 25 years of age or older who had attained higher education was 18.3 percent among women, compared to 15.3% among men. In Spain overall, 31.5 percent of women and 27.5 percent of men had attained higher education.

(32) The enrollment of Dominican immigrant youth (less than 25 years of age) in Spain's educational system has remained comparatively low. In 2011, the percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 20 to 24

who were enrolled full-time in a school or university was only 8.0 percent, rising slightly to 8.8 percent in 2021. These figures can be compared with those for Spain overall, where the percentage of the same age group who were full-time students in schools or universities was 25.4 percent in 2011 and rose to 31.7% in 2021.

(33) The involvement of Dominican youth in schooling increases somewhat when we include part-time students, that is, persons who were in the labor force as well as enrolled in a school or university. In 2021, the percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 20 to 24 who were students in addition to participating in the labor force was 6.7 percent. Adding this to those who were enrolled full-time in schools/universities (8.8 percent among Dominican immigrants in 2021), leads to a total of 15.5 percent involvement in education. This is still comparatively low. The percentage of part-time students (who were both in the labor force and students at the same time) in the 20 to 24 age cohort in Spain overall was equal to 11.7 percent in 2021. When added to the full-time student category (31.7 percent in 2021) the sum is 43.4 percent total enrollment in educational institutions among youth aged 20 to 24 in Spain overall, way higher than the level for Dominican immigrants in the same age group.

(34) There is another disturbing trend. The percentage of young Dominican immigrants aged 20 to 24 who are neither enrolled in the education system (whether full-time or part-time) nor in the labor force (whether with jobs or looking for work) skyrocketed from 9.2 percent in 2011 to 36.2 percent in 2021. It is a general trend that is also observed among the young population of the same age in Spain, for whom the percentage neither in school/university nor in the labor force rises from 10.5 percent in 2011 to 22.9 percent in 2021. These increases reflect the fact that the percentage of young people in the 20 to 24 age group participating in the labor market has dropped considerably in the last decade, both for Dominican immigrants and Spain overall.

(35) Despite the sobering outlook for the group aged 20 to 24, the educational status of the younger cohort of Dominican immigrants, aged 15 to 19, does appear to be improving. The percentage of Dominican immigrants in this age group enrolled full-time in secondary or higher education rose substantially, from 43.8 percent in 2011 to 56.8 percent in 2021. Even so, the percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 15 to 19 who are full-time students is much lower than that observed among the population of the same age in Spain, which was 65.6 percent in 2011 and increased to 82.2 percent in 2021.

(36) Although smaller, there is also a group of part-time students in the 15 to 19 age group. They are enrolled in school while at the same time participating in the labor force. The percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 15 to 19 who were in the labor force while also studying was 3.6 percent in 2021, which when added to the 56.8 percent whose full-time activity was enrollment in school/universities, adds up to a 60.4 percent total participation in education. Among those in Spain overall in this age group, those who went to school while also participating in the labor force was 3.4 percent in 2021, which when added to the 82.2 percent whose full-time activity was school enrollment sums to a total of 86.6 percent of the age group involved in schooling, still enormously higher than among Dominican immigrants.

(37) The rise in school/university enrollment of Dominican immigrants in the 15 to 19 age cohort is encouraging, but there is at the same time another worrying trend: those who are neither enrolled in schools or universities (whether full-time or part-time) nor engaged in the labor market is growing, an outcome previously noted for the 20 to 24 age group. For Dominican immigrants aged 15 to 19, the percentage who neither studied nor was part of the labor force increased from 14.3 percent to 29.1 percent, while in Spain this percentage fell from 15.1 percent to 10.1 percent.

(38) Our conclusions regarding education are of great concern, given the strong connection between educational attainment and labor market indicators. For example, among Dominican immigrants aged 25 or more, those who had attained only primary education or less had an unemployment rate of 60.8 percent in 2021; for those with lower-level secondary education, the unemployment rate was lower, equal to 33.4 percent; for those with higher-level secondary education it went further down to 28.5 percent; and for those with higher education, the unemployment rate was 21.9 percent.

Poverty

(39) To determine the standard of living of a population, it is necessary to examine not only the salaries and income but also the cost of living. And one of the most important components is spending on housing. Both in Spain and in many other countries housing rental costs in large cities have risen rapidly. This disproportionately affects the Dominican population because most of them reside in large cities, such as Madrid and Barcelona, and almost half lived in rental units in 2021, compared to 16 percent for the overall population of Spain.

(40) The percentage of individuals or families living in poverty is a basic indicator of the socio-economic status of a population. To provide an estimate of poverty among the Dominican population, we used data from the Spanish Living Conditions Survey (Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida de España). This survey offers an indicator that establishes whether a person is poor (at risk of living in poverty) on the basis of whether their income lies below a threshold considered to be the minimum required to have a basic, adequate standard of living in Spain. The income threshold adopted by this survey to calculate whether a person is poor is equal to 60 per cent of the median annual per capita income in the country (OECD scale), considering the distribution of the population in Spain. According to this survey, the percentage of people at risk of poverty is higher for: (1) people with foreign nationality, (2) persons under 16 years of age, (3) people with a lower level of education, and (4) the unemployed.

(41) Based on the characteristics of the Dominican population relative to the population of Spain overall, such as the higher proportion of immigrants, the lower median age, the lower level of educational attainment, and the higher unemployment rate, this study estimates that 38.8 percent of the Dominican population was at risk of poverty in 2021, compared to 17.3 percent for the general population of Spain.

Dominicans born in Spain

(42) The Dominican population born in Spain is very young and this makes it very different demographically from the Dominican immigrant population in the country. Among Dominicans born in Spain, 95 percent were under the age of 25 in 2024, compared to 18.8 percent among Dominican immigrants. In fact, most Dominicans born in Spain, 56.4 percent, were under the age of 10, compared to just 1.7 percent for Dominican immigrants.

(43) Another difference is the composition of the population by sex. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Dominican immigrants in Spain is the high proportion of women, a topic discussed earlier. However, as could be expected, the distribution of Dominicans born in Spain is almost equally divided between men and women. In 2024, 49.2 percent of Dominicans born in Spain were women, compared to 59.0 percent among immigrants.

(44) There is also a wide gap between Dominicans born in Spain and immigrants born in the Dominican Republic in the area of education. In 2021, the percentage of Dominicans between the ages of 15 and 19 born in Spain who were enrolled full-time in secondary or higher education was 77.8 percent, and those enrolled part-time was 3.6 percent, which adds up to a total school/university enrollment rate of 81.4 percent. The latter figure is much higher than that prevailing among Dominican immigrants, whose total (full-time and part-time) enrollment rate was 60.9 percent in 2021. It is also close to that of Spain in general, whose total enrollment rate was 85.6 percent for this age group. For young Dominicans between the ages of 20 and 24 born in Spain, the percentage of students enrolled full-time in 2021 was 24.7 percent and part-time was 14.1 percent, adding up to a total enrollment rate of 38.8 percent, which is much higher than the corresponding figure among Dominican immigrants, which was 15.5 percent. It is also close to that of Spain in general, which was 43.4 percent for this age group.

(45) The percentage of young persons who are neither enrolled in school nor in the labor force is substantially lower among the Dominican-born population than among Dominican immigrants. Among young Dominicans aged 15 to 19 born in Spain, 14.1 percent were neither students nor in the labor force,

but among Dominican immigrants in this age group, the corresponding percentage was 29.1 percent. In addition, for young people aged 20 to 24, those who did not study or participate in the labor force made up 25.1 percent of Dominicans born in Spain in 2021, but for Dominican immigrants the percentage was 36.2 percent.

(46) There is still a gender gap in enrollment rates among Dominicans born in Spain. In 2021, for the youngest age group, 15 to 19 years old, the percentage of the female population born in Spain that was enrolled full-time was 80.3 percent and part-time was 3.7 percent, adding up to a total enrollment rate of 84 percent. For males in this age group, the percentage who studied full-time was 76.9 percent and part-time was 3.8 percent, which adds up to an 80.7 percent total enrollment rate. These figures are much higher than those for Dominican immigrants in the same age group. For the latter, the total enrollment rate (full-time or part-time) for the female population was 63.6 percent in 2021 and 57.5 percent for men. In addition, enrollment rates among Dominicans born in Spain are close to those prevailing among the overall population of Spain in the same age group. For the latter, the total enrollment rate in colleges or universities in 2021 was 87.7 percent for the female population and 84.1 percent for men. And note further that the prevailing total enrollment rate among Dominican women aged 15 to 19 born in Spain was precisely the same as that for males in this age group in Spain as a whole: 84 percent.

(47) The gender-based education gap extends to the population aged 20 to 24 years. Among Spanish-born Dominicans in this age group, the percentage enrolled full-time in schools or universities in 2021 was 26.7 percent and part-time was 18.3 percent, adding up to a total enrollment rate of 45 percent. For the male population, the percentage who studied full-time was 22.4 percent and part-time 10.1 percent, which adds up to a 32.5 percent total enrollment rate. Both figures are higher than those prevailing among Dominican immigrants in the same age group, whose total enrollment rate in colleges or universities (full-time or part-time) was 18.5 percent for the female population and 12.7 percent for men. In addition, enrollment rates among Spanish-born Dominicans in this age group approximate those of the general population of Spain. For the latter, the total percentage enrolled in colleges or universities in 2021 was 47.3 percent for the female population and 39.9 percent for men. And it is notable that the prevailing enrollment rate among Dominican women aged 20 to 24 born in Spain was substantially higher than that for men in Spain overall: 45 percent for Dominican women and approximately 40 percent for men in Spain.

INTRODUCTION

The total number of Dominicans residing in Spain in 2024 is estimated to be 269,356. This figure includes 201,162 persons born in the Dominican Republic who resided in Spain in 2023, plus an estimated number of 68,194 people born in Spain and who have at least one parent born in the Dominican Republic. Among the Dominican diasporas in the world, that of Spain is only surpassed by that of the United States, estimated at more than two million. The third largest Dominican population outside the Dominican Republic resides in Puerto Rico, where it is estimated to be at about one hundred thousand.

Despite its importance within the global Dominican diaspora, there is currently no comprehensive analysis of the demographic and socioeconomic situation of Dominicans in Spain. There are studies that have examined past time periods,¹ have discussed specific segments of this population, or explored specific issues affecting it, but none covers its current situation in detail and its evolution over time.² These are the objectives of this research report, which explores the main demographic dynamics of Dominicans in Spain, their immersion in the Spanish labor market, comparative educational attainment, and poverty rates, among others.

Spain has suffered enormous economic turbulence over the last fifteen years. Hit by the devastating financial and economic crisis of 2008 to 2014 and the paralyzing COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the population in Spain has had to navigate difficult times. How have these events affected the Dominican community? Has the impact been proportional or more significant for Dominicans compared to the rest of the country? And after the recovery of recent years, what are the expectations for the socioeconomic progress of the Dominican population in Spain? These are some of the questions this study examines. Based on a broad analysis of the available statistical data, our research discerns some worrying trends in the level and variability of the socioeconomic status of Dominican immigrants in Spain. At the same time, some encouraging patterns are identified in the educational engagement –and, therefore, future economic progress-- of Dominicans born in Spain (with one or both Dominican parents).

The data used in this study have been obtained primarily from the 2001, 2011 and 2021 Censuses of Population and Housing of Spain. Data for 2001 and 2011 come from census public use microdata samples (PUMS).³ The 2021 data comes from the microdata database of this census available through the National Institute of Statistics of Spain (INE), which contains 10 percent of the country's population. These sources of information are complemented by those of the 2023 and 2024 Annual Population Census of Spain, the Survey of Essential Characteristics of the Population and Housing, the Labor Force Survey of Spain, the Survey of Living Conditions, and the Annual Household Survey (all obtained through the INE).

This study is part of a long-term project based at the Dominican Studies Institute at the City University of New York (CUNY) to research the situation of Dominican diasporas in the world. Previous studies have examined the cases of New York City, the United States overall, and Puerto Rico. We hope that this report will contribute to the study of the Dominican community in Spain, its successes and the challenges it faces.

¹ This includes, for example, the studies by Álvarez et. Al. (2023). Novalbos Gómez et. al. (2010), Polanco, Peguero and Chalas (2017).

² Such as the study by Aparicio (2000, 2007); Cabral, Dore & Faxas (2004), Dixon (2021), Dello Iacono (2019), Domingo & Esteve (2010), Gregorio-Gil (1996). Herranz Gómez (1996, 1997), Marrero Peniche and Gutiérrez Guerra (2009), Oso Casas and Herranz (1993), Oso Casas and Ribas (2004), Oso Casas and Varela (2005), Oso Casas and Catarina (2000), Pimentel Paulino (2001, 2003), Romero Valiente (1996, 1997, 2000), Serenasen (1996, 1999) and Valiente (2003).

³ The 2001 and 2011 data used in this report were obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples (IPUMS-International) produced by the University of Minnesota [Ruggles et. al. (2021)]. It should be noted that, to the extent that the surveys just mentioned are population samples, the results provided in this research report are estimates and are subject to a margin of error.

The report begins with a discussion of the key demographic trends, including population growth and its determinants, geographic location in Spain, and population distributions by sex and age, among others. Subsequently, labor market indicators are examined, such as labor force participation rates, unemployment rates, occupational distributions, sector of employment, and salaries. It continues with the theme of education, examining the educational attainment of adults and the school/university enrollment rates of the younger population. This is followed by an analysis of the standard of living among Dominicans, including a discussion of housing and an estimate of poverty rates. Finally, a profile of Dominicans born in Spain is offered, an analysis that is carried out for the first time in the literature on the Dominican population in Spain

I. THE DOMINICAN POPULATION IN SPAIN

How many Dominicans currently reside in Spain and how has this population evolved over time? These are the questions that underpin the data presented in this section.

Like in any study of a specific ethnic group, it is necessary to clarify first the issue of how the Dominican population in Spain is defined. Traditionally, the analysis of this population has focused on people born in the Dominican Republic who reside in Spain; that is, immigrants from the Dominican Republic in this country. But this constitutes a narrow view of what comprises an ethnic group. Evidence shows that the children of immigrants also tend to identify with their parents' country of origin and/or ethnicity even if they were born in the host country. Due to the strong influence of their families and communities, they maintain close cultural and social ties with their parents' country of origin.⁴ and they adopt—to a greater or lesser degree—a dual identity, which includes both an identification with the country where they were born as well as with the country of their parents.

In this report we offer an estimate of the Dominican population in Spain that includes not only persons born in the Dominican Republic who reside in Spain but also the Dominican population born in Spain, that is, the children of Dominican mothers and/or fathers residing in Spain.⁵

As shown in Table 1, the number of Dominicans residing in Spain in 2024 was 269,356. This figure includes the 201,162 persons born in the Dominican Republic plus our estimate of 68,194 persons born in Spain and who have one or both parents born in the Dominican Republic.⁶ The Dominican population in Spain is the second largest among the Dominican diasporas, only exceeded by the one in the United States, whose population is estimated to be over 1.6 million. The third largest Dominican population outside the Dominican Republic resides in Puerto Rico and is estimated at about 100,000.

⁴ Evidence on the extent to which the children of immigrants born in Spain maintain an identity with the country of origin of their parents is offered by Portes, Aparicio and Haller (2017, 2018) and Portes and Aparicio (2013), among others. The results are similar for the U.S., as presented by Cohn et. al. (2021) and Pew Research Center (2013).

⁵ The INE's census surveys do not incorporate specific questions about the ethnicity or ethnic identity of Spain's residents. In the United States, these questions are included and they confirm that the vast majority of children of Dominican parents residing in that country do identify as Dominican, even if they were born in the U.S. [see the discussion in Hernández, Rivera-Batiz, and Sisay (2022)].

⁶ The number of Dominicans born in Spain is equal to the number of persons born in Spain with a father and/or mother born in the Dominican Republic. Although the Population and Housing Censuses do not provide information on the country of origin of the parents of all persons in Spain (only for those living with their parents), the Continuous Household Survey does provide this information. The latest data available from this survey are from 2020. Our analysis indicates that the number of Dominicans born in Spain (to Dominican parents) represented 33.9 percent relative to the Dominican immigrant population (born in the Dominican Republic) in 2020. This percentage was then applied to the 2024 Dominican immigrant population of 201,162, to obtain the estimate of 68,194 for the 2024 Dominican population born in Spain.

Table 1
Dominican population in Spain, 2024

Category	Number of persons
Born in the Dominican Republic	201,162
Born in Spain	68,194
Total number of Dominicans	269,356

The number of Dominicans born in the Dominican Republic is obtained from the 2024 Population Census of Spain. The number of Dominicans born in Spain (to Dominican parents) in 2024 is an estimate based on data from the 2020 Continuous Household Survey, in which the number of Dominicans born in Spain represented 33.9 percent relative to the Dominican immigrant population (born in the Dominican Republic). This percentage was applied to the population of 201,162 Dominican immigrants in 2024, to obtain the estimate of 68,194 for the Dominican population born in Spain in 2024.

Source: INE, Population Census in Spain (2024) and Continuous Household Survey (2020). Authors' tabulations.

The number of Dominicans residing in Spain has grown rapidly. Table 2 shows that the population of Dominicans in Spain grew from 8,205 in 1990 to 48,384 in 2001, rising to 143,144 in 2011 and to a total of 269,356 in 2024. This increase is due to both immigration and natural population growth but has largely been the result of the abundant flow of immigrants. As presented in Table 2, the number of persons born in the Dominican Republic residing in Spain increased from 7,080 in 1990 to 42,860 in 2001, rising to 119,493 in 2011 and to 201,162 in 2023. By comparison, Table 2 shows our estimate of the number of Dominicans born in Spain, which rose from 1,125 in 1990 to 5,324 in 2001, to 23,647 in 2011 and to 68,194 in 2023.

Because most Dominicans in Spain – especially adults – are immigrants, the following sections focus on describing and analyzing the socioeconomic situation of this population. The topic of Dominicans born in Spain is taken up in section VII of this report.

Table 2
Dominicans residing in Spain, 1990-2024

Year	Total number	Immigrants	Born in Spain
1990	8,205	7,080	1,125
2001	48,384	42,860	5,524
2011	143,144	119,493	23,647
2021	254,464	190,040	64,424
2024	259,301	201,162	68,194

Source: For immigrants: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (several years) and Annual Population Census of Spain (2024). Those born in Spain are estimates based on the Continuous Household Survey. Authors' tabulations.

II. MIGRATION FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TO SPAIN

The number of Dominican immigrants in Spain has been setting records in recent years. As presented in Table 3, the average number of Dominican immigrants residing in Spain in 2021 who arrived in Spain during the period 2016-2020 was 9,136 people per year, compared to 6,669 per year during the period 2011-2015, 7,978 per year during the period 2001-2010, and 1,977 per year during the period 1991-2000.

These immigration figures are based on the official censuses carried out by the INE. Undocumented immigrants may not be included in these data. They tend to avoid official government surveys for fear of being detected and possibly deported. And the agencies in charge of collecting population data may encounter more difficulties locating the undocumented, whether through household interviews or administrative data.⁷ However, we do not believe that they constitute a significant portion of the Dominican population. According to estimates by the porCausa Foundation, which has been carrying out this type of analysis for many years, the population of undocumented immigrants in Spain grew substantially over time, reaching a peak in 2003 and 2004, when it is estimated that their number was around one million. However, due to several rounds of regularization laws and the economic crisis of 2008 to 2014 – among other factors – the stock of undocumented immigrants in Spain plummeted in the following decade, reaching its lowest level in 2013 and 2014. Since then, it has gradually increased again. The most recent estimates suggest that this population is now between 400,000 and 500,000.⁸ Dominicans, though, are not among the most numerous groups within this population. According to the porCausa Foundation estimates, by the end of 2019 the largest groups of undocumented immigrants were Colombians (93,304), Hondurans (71,064), Venezuelans (50,469), Peruvians (30,119), Argentineans (19,194), Russians (12,776), Moroccans (12,558), Ukrainians (12,366), Senegalese (7,730) and Algerians (6,539).⁹ The estimated number of undocumented Dominican immigrants is lower.

Table 3

**Dominican immigrants residing in Spain in 2021,
by year of arrival in Spain**

Category/period of arrival	Absolute number	Average annual increase
Total, persons born in the Dominican Republic	190,040	--
2016-2020	45,678	9,136
2011-2015	33,347	6,669
2001-2010	79,779	7,978
1991-2000	19,776	1,977
Before 1991	11,460	--

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021). Authors' tabulations.

⁷ See, for example, the discussion in Evans et. Al. (2019), and de la Puente and Stemper (2003).

⁸ Fanjul (2023).

⁹ Fanjul and Gálvez-Iniesta (2020).

What factors have led to the growth of migration from the Dominican Republic to Spain? The literature on this topic discerns two types of forces: those generated in the country of origin, which push the person to emigrate, and those in the receiving country, which attract the immigrant to his or her destination.¹⁰ These forces can be socio-economic, but they can also be political in nature, as is the case with refugees and asylum seekers. In the case of Dominican migration, numerous causes have been examined, from public policies and uneven development in the Dominican Republic to economic divergences between the two countries.¹¹ Due to their predominance in the most recent migratory movement, we emphasize socioeconomic variables.

The large average wage gap between the two countries is, of course, one of the most important factors explaining Dominican migration. This is especially the case when migration from the Dominican Republic to Spain starts to expand in the 1990s. According to World Bank data – which are adjusted for inflation and for differences in the cost of living between countries – the average per capita income in the Dominican Republic was equal to 22.2 percent of that of Spain in 1991. This was a great migratory incentive, especially since Spain is the Spanish-speaking country with the highest per capita income in the world

This gap in income per-capita has narrowed dramatically over the past thirty years due to the accelerated economic growth in the Dominican Republic, but it remains significant: in 2023, According to World Bank data, the Dominican Republic had a per capita income that was equal to 47 percent of Spain's. Of course, one would expect that the shrinking of the economic gap between the two countries would reduce migration, and this has not happened. However, there are several explanations. First, the evidence shows that emigration has in fact accelerated from many developing countries even as their average per-capita income has risen, especially when the country of origin has high levels of poverty¹². The reason is that the act of emigrating can be relatively expensive and difficult to finance for those with low income, both because of the transportation costs involved as well as the cost of arriving in a new country, settling in and looking for work, which can take some time. An income increase in the country of origin can allow the migrant and her or his family to obtain the financial resources necessary to migrate.

Another important factor is that rapid economic growth in developing countries is associated with severe structural changes. These often lead to the marginalization of part of the population, especially in regions or sectors of the economy that are negatively affected, such as rural areas and the agricultural sector.¹³ A large part of the dislocated population is incorporated into an informal sector that offers minimal income and unstable jobs. Many see emigration as the only way out of poverty. In addition, the neoliberal development strategies adopted by many countries have led to an increase in social inequality and a lack of substantial economic progress for those at the bottom of the income distribution. In the Dominican Republic, despite the fact that poverty has fallen significantly, the World Bank points out that 22 percent of the population in 2022 remained below the extreme poverty level of \$6.85 per day in personal income.¹⁴ The detailed analysis of the Dominican economic miracle by University of Oslo academic Christian Krohn-Hansen concludes: "The Dominican Republic has seen growth, but the nation is still characterized by an incredibly high proportion of workers in a vulnerable situation."¹⁵

Another force that explains the acceleration of Dominican migration to Spain recently is the formation of family and social networks that provide information on the availability of jobs and help in the process of departure, travel and arrival of the migrant. These networks occur in migrant communities around the world, including Spain.¹⁶ As a result, the greater the number of immigrants in a destination area, the lower the cost of adjustment and incorporation of new migrants into its labor market, which promotes further migration. This process is also facilitated by immigration laws that favor family reunification.

¹⁰ See the survey in Rivera-Batiz (2013) and the application to Spain in Romero Valiente (2003).

¹¹ See Hernández (2002), Romero Valiente (2003), Valiente (2003), Merrero Peniche and Gutiérrez Guerra (2009), Mayda (2010), Aponte (2012) and Krohn-Hansen (2022).

¹² Hatton and Williamson (2005) and Mayda (2010).

¹³ See the discussion in Rivera-Batiz (2013).

¹⁴ World Bank (2023).

¹⁵ Krohn-Hansen (2022).

¹⁶ The classic study on chain migration is that of Massey et. al. (1987) who examined the phenomenon among Mexican immigrants in the United States. The case of Spain is discussed by Aparicio and Tornos (2005), Neubecker et al, (2013).

Finally, there are circumstances that originate exclusively in Spain and that have accompanied the increase in migration to that country. The most significant is demographic. Due to a reduction in the fertility rate, natural population growth (births minus deaths) in Spain has sharply declined over time and has become negative since 2015. Combined with an aging population and a rising number of retirees, the result has been the emergence of shortages of local workers in segments of the labor market for which the labor supply among the Spanish population has not grown in tandem with demand. For example, according to a study by the Bank of Spain released in 2023, the percentage of companies for which the availability of labor is a "negative" or "very negative" factor affecting its operations was 52.2 per cent in the hospitality sector, 50.0 per cent in construction, 46.6 per cent in IT and communications, and 42.6 per cent in agriculture. These labor shortages have been a significant driver of immigration in Spain. They have also influenced the government's immigration policies, whose reforms and regulations in recent years focus on attracting immigrants to fill jobs in sectors with high vacancy rates.¹⁷

Immigration has sustained the positive rate of population growth in Spain in recent years. The overall increase in the population, from 46,449,565 in 2015 to 48,619,695 in 2024, has been a direct consequence of the expansion in the number of foreigners residing in the country, which grew from 4,729,644 in 2015 to 8,838,234 in 2024. In fact, for various regions in Spain, migration has already been essential in counteracting depopulation. As a study by the Elcano Royal Institute concludes: "Our results show that the contribution of immigration has significantly slowed down population loss for the 22 provinces studied. In addition, for a significant part of them, immigration has managed to make their demographic growth positive since the year 2000."¹⁸

It is worth emphasizing that depopulation can create serious economic and social challenges.¹⁹ The shortage of available workers makes it difficult for the business sector to function and expand in the economy, whether in those sectors intensive in unskilled labor, such as agriculture and the service sector, or in those of high technology. Associated with depopulation is also an increase in the proportion of retired persons, which raises the economic dependency ratio and creates stress on the financing and operation of the social security and public health systems.²⁰ These are challenges faced not only by Spain but by other countries in the European Union.²¹

The accelerated growth of Dominican migration to Spain is reflected in the fact that Dominican immigrants now constitute the twelfth largest foreign-born population in the country. As Table 4 shows, Dominican immigrants made up 2.3 percent of all foreign-born persons residing in Spain in 2024. The country with the largest number of immigrants in Spain is Morocco (with 1,092,892 migrants), followed by Colombia (856,616), Venezuela (599,769), Romania (532,456), Ecuador (446,653), Argentina (415,987), Peru (378,924), the United Kingdom (285,532), France (217,247), Cuba (223,532), France (217,247), Ukraine (215,700) and Honduras (198,805).

¹⁷ Millán (2023). A detailed discussion of the topic of immigration and the Spanish labor market is offered by Leguina Herrán (2023). See also the history of immigration policies in Spain, particularly in relation to Dominican migration, in Marrero Peniche and Gutiérrez Guerra (2009).

¹⁸ Tights (2010).

¹⁹ See Square et. al. (2023), Rivera-Batiz (2017), Jones (2022).

²⁰ Clements et. al. (2015).

²¹ See the European Commission report: European Commission (2022).

Table 4
Foreign-born population in Spain, by country of origin, 2024

Country or demographic group	Population in 2024	% of foreign population
Total Spain	48,619,695	
Persons born in Spain	39,781,461	
Foreign-born	8,838,234	100.0%
1. Morocco	1,092,892	12.4%
2. Colombia	856,616	9.7%
3. Romania	599,769	6.8%
4. Venezuela	532,456	6.0%
5. Ecuador	446,643	5.1%
6. Argentina	415,987	4.7%
7. Perú	378,924	4.3%
8. United Kingdom	293,696	3.2%
9. Cuba	223,532	2.5%
10. France	217,247	2.5%
11. Ukraine	215,700	2.4%
12. Dominican Republic	201,319	2.3%
13. Honduras	198,805	2.2%

Source: INE, Annual Population Census of Spain (2024). Authors' tabulations.

III. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS IN SPAIN

Geographical Distribution

The Dominican immigrant population is highly concentrated geographically. Table 5 shows the breakdown of the population of Dominican immigrants in Spain by autonomous community. About 60 percent of this population in 2024 was residing in just two communities: Madrid (34.0 percent) and Catalonia (24.3 percent). Lagging were Castilla y León with 6.1 percent of the Dominican population, Andalucía (4.9 percent), and Galicia (4.9 percent).

Table 5
Geographical distribution of Dominican immigrants in Spain
By Autonomous Community, 2024

Autonomous Community	Population	% of total	Autonomous community	Population	% of total
Spain, total	201,162	100.0%	Basque Region	5,185	2.6%
Community of Madrid	68,448	34.0%	Asturias	5,107	2.5%
Catalonia	48,951	24.3%	Canary Islands	4,976	2.5%
Castilla y León	12,312	6.1%	Navarre	3,958	2.0%
Andalucía	9,810	4.9%			
Galicia	9,771	4.9%	Others	6,295	3.2%
Comunidad Valenciana	7,505	3.7%			
Castilla y La Mancha	7,132	3.5%			
Aragón	5,968	3.0%			
Balearic Islands	5,744	2.8%			

Other Autonomous Communities: Cantabria, Extremadura, La Rioja, and Murcia; Ceuta and Melilla are autonomous cities.

Source: INE, Annual Population Census of Spain (2024). Authors' tabulations.

Table 6
The growing geographical dispersion of Dominican immigrants in Spain, 2001-2024

Year	Total Spain	%	Madrid	%	Catalonia	%	Other	%
2001	42,860	100.0%	18,580	43.4%	10,260	23.9%	14,020	32.7%
2011	119,493	100.0%	40,407	33.8%	30,480	25.5%	48,606	40.7%
2021	190,040	100.0%	64,791	34.1%	44,973	23.7%	80,276	42.2%
2024	201,162	100.0%	68,448	34.0%	48,951	24.3%	83,763	41.7%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (several years) and Annual Population Census of Spain (2024). Authors' tabulations.

Naturalization Rates

A substantial –and rising– proportion of Dominican immigrants has acquired Spanish nationality. The essential requirement for a citizen of the Dominican Republic to obtain Spanish citizenship by naturalization is to reside in Spain legally and continuously for 1 or 2 years, depending on your specific marital situation, i.e. if you are married to a Spanish citizen or not. Citizenship by descent can also be obtained for those born in the Dominican Republic who have a Spanish father or mother, and for those born in Spain who have at least one of their parents born in Spain. There is also no need for Dominicans adopting Spanish nationality to abandon their own. A 1968 agreement allows citizens of the Dominican Republic to acquire dual nationality with Spain, something that is available as well to other Latin American countries, Andorra, Portugal, Equatorial Guinea, and the Philippines.

As shown in Table 7, the percentage of persons born in the Dominican Republic residing in Spain who have acquired Spanish nationality was 67.8 percent in 2024. This figure is well above the average for the overall foreign population in Spain, whose nationalization rate was 33.1 percent. However, there is a wide divergence among the various groups of foreigners in Spain, from Romanians, whose naturalization rate is 4 percent, to Ecuadorians whose rate is close to 74 percent.

The naturalization rate of Dominicans in Spain is higher than that prevalent among this population in the United States, where 56 percent of immigrants had been naturalized in 2022.²² But even in the U.S., the Dominican population has a higher naturalization rate than the average among the foreign population of that country.

Table 7

**Persons born in the Dominican Republic: Spanish versus Foreign Nationality
2011-2024**

Demographic group	Population	% of total
2011		
Total, people born in the Dominican Republic	119,493	100.0%
With Spanish nationality	21,632	18.1%
With Foreign nationality	97,861	81.9%
2024		
Total, people born in the Dominican Republic	201,162	100.0%
With Spanish nationality	136,411	67.8%
With Foreign nationality	64,751	32.2%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2011) and Annual Population Census of Spain (2024).
Authors' tabulations.

²² Marrow and Batalova (2024).

The longer the stay in Spain, the greater the probability that the person will acquire Spanish nationality. For example, as Table 8 shows, among Dominicans who arrived in Spain between 2011 and 2020, only 36.6 percent had been naturalized by 2021, while 79.8 percent of those who arrived in Spain between 2001 and 2010 had obtained Spanish nationality by 2021. For those who arrived in previous years, the naturalization rate rises to over 90 percent.

Table 8
Persons born in the Dominican Republic:
Naturalization rates by year of arrival in Spain
2021

Population group	Total	% of total.	Spanish citizens	% of total
Total	190,040	100.0%	121,308	63.8%
Arrival between 2016 and 2020	45,678	100.0%	11,234	24.6%
Arrival between 2011 and 2015	33,347	100.0%	17,664	53.0%
Arrival between 2001 and 2010	79,779	100.0%	63,679	79.8%
Arrival between 1991 and 2000	19,776	100.0%	17,856	90.3%
Arrival before 1991	11,460	100.0%	10,875	94.9%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021). Authors' tabulations.

There is also a significant difference in the naturalization of Dominican immigrants based on gender. Table 9 shows that 71.7 percent of women in 2024 had obtained Spanish nationality, compared to 62.3 percent of men. What is the reason for this difference? There are a wide variety of factors that impact naturalization. One of them, mentioned earlier, is the number of years that the person has resided in Spain. Because the early waves of Dominican migration to Spain were predominantly female, an issue that is analyzed below, on average women have been residing in Spain for a longer period than men and this partly explains their higher naturalization rates. Another determining factor in naturalization is the social and economic situation of the immigrant: naturalization offers greater access to the labor market as well as preferential access to government programs.²³ The social and economic situation of immigrant women in general is more fragile than that of men, due to a variety of factors that range from occupational segregation and wage discrimination to gender-based violence and exploitation. These factors apply to the Dominican immigrant population as well (the gender gap in employment and wages, for instance, will be discussed in a later section).

²³ See, in the case of Spain: Martínez de Lizarrondo Artola (2016). For the case of the United States, see Enchautegui and Giannarelli (2015).

Table 9**Persons born in the Dominican Republic: Naturalization rates, by sex
2024**

Population group	Total	%	Men	%	Women	%
Born in the Dominican Republic	201,162	100.0%	82,571	100.0%	118,591	100.0%
Spanish nationals	136,411	67.8%	51,420	62.3%	84,991	71.7%
With foreign nationality	64,751	32.2%	31,151	37.7%	33,600	28.3%

Source: INE, Annual Population Census of Spain (2024). Authors' tabulations.

Composition of the population by sex

One of the distinguishing features of Dominican migration to Spain is the large proportion of women. Table 10 shows that women made up about 60 percent of the Dominican immigrant population residing in Spain in 2024, a significantly higher percentage than the 51 percent for the general population in Spain. The proportion of women among Dominicans residing in the communities of Madrid and Catalonia was somewhat lower than for Dominicans overall, equal to 57.6 percent in Madrid and 57.1 percent in Catalonia.

Table 10**Dominican immigrant population in Spain by sex, 2024**

Population group	Total number	%	Women	%	Men	%
Population in Spain	48,619,695	100.0%	24,792,824	51.0%	23,826,871	49.0%
Dominican Population	201,162	100.0%	118,591	59.0%	82,571	41.0%
Dominicans in Madrid	68,448	100.0%	39,450	57.6%	28,998	42.4%
Dominicans in Catalonia	48,951	100.0%	27,932	57.1%	21,019	42.9%

Source: INE, Annual Population Census of Spain (2024). Authors' tabulations.

The high proportion of women among migrants from the Dominican Republic in Spain prevails also in Dominican migration to other countries as well.²⁴ What explains this pattern? The socioeconomic factor is essential in understanding it. The inequality in the situation of women relative to that of men in the Dominican Republic has been a persistent characteristic of this economy. A study on the economic status of women in the Dominican Republic over the last 20 years concludes (National Statistics Office, 2021, p. 7): "...We found that women have a higher poverty incidence, and female-headed households specifically have a higher proportion of persons who are in extreme and moderate poverty compared to other households. Why women are more likely to be poor is due to their lower labor market participation rates and greater uncertainty about their future income, which translates into a feminization of poverty."²⁵

Socioeconomic inequality based on gender in the Dominican Republic is therefore a key factor determining the higher emigration of women relative to that of men. So is the attraction of the ample employment opportunities available in Spain's service sector, where a large proportion of Dominican women are employed and in which the shortage of national workers attracts immigration. This will be explored in a later section.

It is worth mentioning that although the proportion of women among Dominican immigrants in Spain continues to be relatively high, this proportion has been decreasing. As Table 11 displays, about 70 percent of the immigrant population in Spain in 2001 consisted of women. But the proportion falls to 59 percent in 2024.

Table 11

Evolution of the Dominican immigrant population in Spain by sex 2001-2024

Year	Total Dominicans	%	Women	%	Men	%
2001	42,860	100.0%	29,880	69.7%	12,980	30.3%
2011	119,493	100.0%	68,431	57.3%	51,062	42.7%
2021	190,040	100.0%	112,380	59.1%	77,660	40.9%
2024	201,162	100.0%	118,591	59.0%	82,571	41.0%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (several years) and Annual Population Census of Spain (2024). Authors' tabulations.

²⁴ For the case of Puerto Rico, see Hernández, Rivera-Batiz, and Sisay (2023) and Hernández-Angueira, L. (1990).

²⁵ Authors' translation. See also Polanco Acosta (2023) and Ramírez Mordám (2012).

Age distribution

The Dominican immigrant population in Spain is younger than the overall population of the country. As shown in Table 12, the median age of Dominican immigrants was 39 years in 2024 compared to 44 years in Spain. And there is a significant gender gap: the median among Dominican women was 42 years in 2024 while for Dominican men it was 37 years. This gap also exists among the population of Spain in general, but it is not as considerable and equal to three years of difference, compared to five years in the case of the Dominican population.

The Dominican immigrant population in Spain is aging. Their median age has risen from 31 in 2001, to 33 in 2011, and to 40 in 2024. The population in Spain is also aging, but the median age in Spain is much higher than among Dominican immigrants; for example, in 2024 it was equal to 44 years. These age patterns are reproduced for both men and women.

Table 12

Median age of the Dominican immigrant population in Spain, 2001-2024

Year	Dominicans			Spain		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
2001	31	34	24	37	39	36
2011	33	37	28	41	43	40
2024	40	42	37	44	46	43

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census in Spain (several years) and Annual Population Census in Spain (2024). Authors' tabulations.

The age gap between Dominicans and the rest of Spain is evident when we look at the population aged 64 and over. As shown in Table 13, this age group represented 4.5 percent of the population born in the Dominican Republic in 2021, but for the overall population in Spain it was much higher: 19.6 percent. These figures reflect the high proportion of recent immigrants among the Dominican population in Spain. Immigrants tend to be younger than the country's general population.

Table 13

Distribution of the Dominican immigrant population in Spain by age group, 2001 and 2021

Year	Dominicans			Spain		
	Less than 16	16 to 64	Over 64	Less than 16	16 to 64.	Over 64
2001	16.3%	82.2%	1.5%	15.5%	67.4%	17.1%
2021	5.2%	90.3%	4.5%	15.2%	65.2%	19.6%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (several years). Authors' tabulations.

Household structure

The proportion of Dominican immigrants whose marital status is legally married is considerably lower than for Spain overall. Table 14 shows that 33.1 percent of Dominican immigrants 16 years of age or older were married in 2021, compared to 47.2 percent for the overall population Spain. The remaining family categories include single, divorced, separated and those living with unmarried partners, which together encompass 66.9 percent of Dominicans compared to 52.8 percent among the overall population in Spain.

Table 14

Marital Status of Dominican in Spain, 2021

People 16 years of age or older

	Dominicans	Total Spain
Single	41.0%	33.1%
Married	33.1%	47.2%
Widowed	1.8%	7.3%
Divorced/separated	11.1%	7.4%
Other/Not Available	13.0%	5.0%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain 2021. Authors' tabulations.

As presented in Table 15, about a quarter (25.2 percent) of Dominicans resided in families composed of a parent cohabiting with children in 2021. And more than 90 percent of these single-parent families were headed by women. The percentage of persons residing in single-parent families in Spain overall is much lower and equal to 15.7 percent in 2021. These differences are also reflected in the percentage of Dominicans residing in families composed of a couple with children, which was 36.2 percent in 2021, substantially lower than that of Spain, which was 49.2 percent.

Table 15

Family type: Dominicans in Spain, 2021

	Dominicans	Spain
Couple without children	10.9%	15.8%
Couple with children	36.2%	49.2%
Single mother living with children	21.8%	12.7%
Single father living with children	3.4%	3.0%
Other type of family or not residing in a family	27.7%	19.3%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

IV. THE LABOR MARKET AND THE DOMINICAN IMMIGRANT POPULATION

As a source of employment and income, the labor market represents the basis of a population's standard of living. For immigrants, labor market indicators are also a reflection of their adaptation and incorporation into the economy of the country that receives them. This section presents the labor market situation of Dominican immigrants in Spain, including an analysis of their labor force participation, unemployment, occupational distribution, sector of employment, and an estimate of their wages.

Labor force participation rates

The minimum legal age to work in Spain is 16 years old. For the population aged 16 years or older, two groups are distinguished: (1) those in the labor force, i.e. those who have paid employment (employed) or are actively looking for work (unemployed), and (2) those out of the labor force, i.e. those who are neither employed nor looking for work, which includes full-time students and retirees, among others. The labor force participation rate is equal to the percentage of the population aged 16 and over that forms part of the labor force.

The labor force participation rate of the Dominican immigrant population is higher than that prevailing among the overall population in Spain. Specifically, as Table 16 shows, the labor participation rate of the Dominican population was 62.5 percent in 2021 while that of Spain overall was 56 percent. This gap in the labor force participation rate has been sustained over the years, but it is decreasing, guided by an increase in the participation rate in Spain (from 50.4 percent in 2001 to 56 percent in 2021) and a fall in the corresponding rate for the Dominican population (from 69.0 percent in 2001 to 62.5 percent in 2021).

Table 16

Labor force participation rates of Dominican immigrants in Spain, 2001-2021
Persons 16 years of age or older

Year	Labor force participation rate (%)	
	Dominican immigrants	Spain
2001	69.0%	52.6%
2011	82.7%	63.4%
2021	62.5%	56.0%

The labor force participation rate is equal to the number of persons who are employed or unemployed (looking for work) as a percentage of the population in the designated age group. Persons out of the labor force include retired people, full-time students, permanently disabled persons, and others.

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain 2001, 2011 and 2021. Authors' tabulations.

The labor force participation rate of the Dominican population is comparatively high not only when compared to the general population in Spain but also to other demographic groups, including the population born in Spain and the overall foreign-born population in the country. As Table 17 shows, the labor force participation rate for the Spanish-born population was 55.8 percent in 2021 and for the foreign-born population it was 56.5 percent, compared to 62.5 percent for the Dominican population. Even if we compare it to persons born in the European Union (excluding Spain), Dominicans display higher labor force participation rates.

Table 17
Labor force participation rates in Spain
2021
People 16 years of age or older

Population group	Labor force participation rate (%)
Total, Spain	56.0%
Total population born in Spain	55.8%
Total foreign-born population	56.5%
Persons born in the European Union (excluding Spain)	60.1%
Born in the Dominican Republic	62.5%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain 2021. Authors' tabulations.

Traditionally, labor force participation rates are higher for men than for women. This also applies to the Dominican immigrant population. Nonetheless, the greater participation rates of the Dominican population compared to other groups in Spain are sustained for both men and women. As can be seen in Table 18, the labor force participation rate of Dominican men aged 16 years or older in 2021 was 63.4 percent, while for the overall male population in Spain it was 59.3 percent. Among Dominican women, the labor force participation rate was equal to 61.8 percent in 2021, while for women in Spain overall it was 53 percent.

The labor force participation rate of the Dominican immigrant population is declining for both men and women, as shown in Table 18. In the case of men, it has fallen from 70.9 percent in 2001 to 63.4 percent in 2021. For women it fell from 66.0 percent in 2001 to 61.8 percent in 2021. The declining labor force participation rate also holds for the overall population in Spain, but only for men, whose participation rate fell from 62.8 percent in 2001 to 59.3 percent in 2021. However, the female labor force participation rate in Spain grew during this period, from 38.7 percent to 53 percent.

Table 18
Labor force participation rates by sex, 2001-2021
People 16 years of age or older

Population group	Labor force participation rate (%)		
	Total	Men	Women
2001			
Dominican population	67.3%	70.9%	66.0%
Population in Spain	50.4%	62.8%	38.7%
2011			
Dominican population	82.7%	82.2%	83.0%
Population in Spain	63.4%	68.1%	59.4%
2021			
Dominican population	62.5%	63.4%	61.8%
Population in Spain	56.0%	59.3%	53.0%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain 2001 and 2021. Authors' tabulations.

The higher labor force participation rate of Dominican immigrants compared to the overall population in Spain is mainly explained by differences in the age distribution between the two populations. As established previously, Spain's population has a greater proportion of persons in the age group over 64 years old. And the data show that labor force participation decreases abruptly over the age of 64, when many people retire. As Table 19 presents, the labor force participation rate of the population over 64 years of age was 10.6 percent for Dominicans and 3.5 percent for the population in Spain.

But if one focuses on the group between 16 and 64 years old, Dominican immigrants have a lower labor force participation rate than the overall Spanish population. As shown in Table 19, the participation rate for Dominicans between the ages of 16 and 64 in 2021 was 65.1 percent compared to 71.8 percent among the overall population of Spain.

Table 19 also shows that the labor participation rate of Dominican immigrants declined substantially between 2011 and 2021 for all age groups. For example, among Dominicans over 64 years of age, the participation rate falls from 18.6 percent to 10.6 percent; and for the Dominican population between 55 and 59 years of age, the reduction is from 84.3 percent to 68.3 percent. Although the labor force participation rate also falls for Spain in general, it is not as dramatic as for Dominicans and it increases in some age groups. For example, for the 55 to 59 age group, the labor force participation rate rises in Spain, from 72.3 percent in 2011 to 76.5 percent in 2021, and for the 60 to 64 age group it also increases from 43.2 percent to 56.7 percent.

Table 19
Labor force participation rates in Spain by age, 2011-2021
Persons 16 years of age and older

Age Group	Labor force participation rate (%)			
	Dominicans		Spain	
	2011	2021	2011	2021
Total	82.7%	62.5%	63.4%	56.0%
From 16 to 64 years old	83.8%	65.1%	78.7%	71.8%
From 25 to 29 years old	85.2%	66.7%	88.2%	75.0%
From 30 to 34 years old	91.2%	69.8%	92.7%	81.1%
From 35 to 39 years old	89.0%	71.7%	92.8%	83.8%
From 40 to 44 years old	90.3%	71.8%	90.9%	85.1%
From 45 to 49 years old	88.4%	72.1%	88.4%	84.5%
From 50 to 54 years old	87.0%	71.6%	83.5%	81.8%
From 55 to 59 years old	84.3%	68.3%	72.3%	76.5%
From 60 to 64 years old	64.3%	64.2%	43.2%	56.7%
Over 64 years of age	18.6%	10.6%	4.5%	3.5%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain 2011 and 2021. Authors' tabulations.

Unemployment

The unemployed are defined as people aged 16 or over who are (1) not employed, but available for work and actively looking for work, or (2) not employed at the time of the interview, but waiting to start a new job that they have already found. The unemployment rate is equal to the percentage of those in the labor force who are unemployed.

Dominican immigrants display a considerably higher unemployment rate than the overall labor force in Spain. As Table 20 shows, the unemployment rate among Dominicans was 28.8 percent in 2021, compared to 17 percent for the overall labor force in Spain. This gap in the unemployment rate has been maintained over time, but it became abysmal in 2011, when the Spanish economy was going through the 2008-2014 economic and financial crisis. In 2011, the unemployment rate for Dominicans was 49.3 percent compared to 29.6 percent in Spain. In both cases, the unemployment rate was higher than in 2001, when it represented 20.1 percent for Dominicans compared to 14.1 percent for the overall labor force of Spain.

Table 20

**Unemployment rate in Spain, 2001-2021
Persons in the labor force**

Year	Unemployment Rate (%)	
	Dominicans	Spain overall
2001	20.1%	14.1%
2011	49.3%	29.6%
2021	28.8%	17.0%

The labor force includes only persons aged 16 years or older who are employed or unemployed.

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain 2001, 2011 and 2021.

The increase in the unemployment rate of Dominicans compared to Spain overall reflects to a large extent the disproportionate impact that both the economic crisis of the early 2010s and the 2020 COVID pandemic had on Dominican workers. This is explained, in turn, by the greater concentration of Dominican workers in the sectors of the economy that were most severely affected by these crises: services, and construction.

However, the fact that the unemployment rate among Dominicans has remained above that of the overall Spanish workforce over the long term suggests that there are other explanatory factors besides business cycles.²⁶ One of them is based on the type of labor market segment in which immigrants are concentrated. The labor market can be decomposed into two distinct components: (1) a primary sector, where long-term employment contracts are the rule, with good working conditions and salaries as well as substantial employee benefits, and (2) a secondary labor market that offers a higher proportion of temporary contracts, with few possibilities of promotion, lower salaries, and scant employee benefits.²⁷ In many countries, including Spain, the secondary labor market includes the informal economy.²⁸ The latter can be of great importance: In Spain it is estimated that the informal sector may account for as much as a quarter of the gross domestic product and even more in terms of employment.²⁹ Immigrants tend to be concentrated in the secondary labor market sector, where they are subject to a higher probability of unemployment or sub-employment, especially since many of the jobs they fill are part-time and often seasonal (in agriculture, the hospitality industry, etc.).

Workers' personal characteristics can also cause greater susceptibility to unemployment. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, educational attainment (the higher the level of schooling attained, the lower the unemployment, especially in sectors with high demand), age and work experience (the greater the number of years of working in an occupation, the lower the probability of unemployment), the sex of the person (which due to occupational segregation and gender-based discrimination negatively affects women), and race, national origin or ethnic group (which also due to discrimination can negatively affect the employment rate).

²⁶ The unemployment rate in Spain tends to exceed that of other industrialized countries and the average for the European Union. This suggests that there are structural forces – unrelated to business cycles – that explain this persistently high level of unemployment (see García Brtosa and Sanromá, 2023).

²⁷ This analysis of the labor market originates in Doeringer and Piore, 1985 (see the literature review by Bentolila, Dolado, and Jimeno, 2019), although it is also based on Marxist analysis, which indicates the presence of a reserve of marginalized workers who are not fully incorporated into the proletariat in capitalist economies, and which includes large groups of immigrants (see the discussion of these theories in Carrasco Carpio, 2015).

²⁸ The informal sector comprises all economic activities which are hidden from --or unregistered with-- official authorities because of economic, regulatory, or other reasons.

²⁹ Pappadà and Rogoff (2023).

Table 21
Unemployment rate by gender, 2001-2021
Persons in the labor force

Population group	Unemployment rate (%)		
	Total	Men	Women
2001			
Dominicans	20.1%	23.4%	18.8%
Spain overall	14.1%	11.0%	17.0%
2011			
Dominicans	49.3%	58.0%	43.6%
Spain overall	29.6%	25.1%	32.9%
2021			
Dominicans	28.8%	24.6%	31.5%
Spain overall	17.0%	13.9%	20.3%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain 2001, 2011 and 2021. Authors' tabulations.

Among demographic forces, gender can have a significant impact on unemployment. And this is confirmed in the case of Spain. As shown in Table 21, the unemployment rate for women in 2021 was higher than that for men in both Spain overall and among Dominicans. In that year, the unemployment rate among Dominican women was 31.5 percent while for Dominican men it was 24.6 percent. Both were higher than those in Spain overall, where the female unemployment rate was 20.3 percent and that among men was 13.9 percent in 2021.

However, this gap in the unemployment rate of the Dominican labor force has not always favored men. The economic crisis of 2008 to 2014 had a greater impact on the male workforce and as a result, in 2011, the unemployment rate among Dominican men was a shocking 58.0% compared to 43.6% for Dominican women. This differential can be attributed to the fact that a higher proportion of Dominican men worked in the construction sector, which was devastated by the financial and real estate crisis.

The youth unemployment rate is usually higher than that for the rest of the workforce. Table 22 shows unemployment rates by age group in 2021. Indeed, although the overall unemployment rate for the Dominican workforce aged 16 to 64 was 28.8 percent in 2021, the rate for those aged 16 to 19 was much higher, equal to 51.1 percent, and it was 33.8 percent for those aged 20 to 24. This age-unemployment profile is also prevalent among Spanish workers in general: The overall unemployment rate in Spain for the 16 to 64 age group was 17.3 percent in 2021, but it was 46.4 percent for those between 16 and 19 years old, and 25.1 percent for those between 20 and 24 years old. Still, the unemployment rate among Dominican workers is substantially higher than that for the general population in Spain for all age categories.

Table 22
Unemployment rate in Spain by age, 2021
Persons aged 16-64 years in the labor force

Age group	Unemployment rate (%)	
	Dominicans	Spain
Overall (16 to 64 years old)	30.2%	17.3%
16 to 19 years old	51.1%	46.4%
From 20 to 24 years old	33.8%	25.1%
From 25 to 29 years old	29.4%	19.4%
From 30 to 34 years old	26.8%	16.6%
From 35 to 39 years old	26.9%	14.7%
From 40 to 44 years old	26.3%	13.3%
From 45 to 49 years old	27.4%	13.9%
From 50 to 54 years old	29.0%	15.8%
From 55 to 59 years old	31.6%	18.9%
From 60 to 64 years old	37.1%	19.8%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

How does the unemployment rate of the Dominican immigrant population compare to that of other immigrants in Spain? Table 23 shows that the unemployment rate of Dominican workers is higher than that for the foreign-born population in general. In 2021, the average unemployment rate among foreign-born workers was 22.2 percent, but Dominican workers exhibited a considerably higher unemployment rate, equal to 28.8 percent. It is worth emphasizing, however, that there is great variation in unemployment rates by country of birth of the immigrant. These vary according to the demographics of the immigrants, their educational level, and specific country of origin, among others. For example, the unemployment rate among Moroccan workers in Spain in 2021 was 35.2 percent while for those born in the European Union (outside Spain) the rate was much lower, and equal to 20.7 percent. Finally, as Table 23 shows, regardless of country of origin, the unemployment rate among immigrants is higher than that prevailing among those born in Spain, whose unemployment rate was 16 percent in 2021.

Table 23
Unemployment rate in Spain: foreign-born versus Spanish-born, 2021
Persons 16 years of age or older

	Unemployment rate (%)
Total, Spain	17.0%
Population born in Spain	16.0%
Foreign-born population	22.2%
People born in the European Union (excluding Spain)	20.7%
Born in the Dominican Republic	28.8%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

Occupations

The distribution of occupations among Dominican immigrant workers differs considerably from that prevailing among the overall workforce in Spain. As Table 24 shows, in 2021, 63.8 percent of Dominicans worked in service sector occupations while the figure for Spain overall was 33.3 percent, approximately half.

The concentration of workers in the service sector is even higher for women. Table 25 shows that 82.4 per cent of Dominican women worked in the service sector compared to 46 per cent of female workers in Spain overall. Among Dominican men, both the service sector and the group of occupations that includes operators, mechanics, assemblers, machinists, employment and laborers represent important sources of employment, with 43.6 percent working in services and 38.7 percent as operators, mechanics, assemblers, machinists, and laborers. These occupational categories are not as significant among the overall workforce in Spain.

Table 26 presents the specific employment activities in which Dominican immigrant workers were employed in 2021. The most important are hospitality sector activities, which account for 26.6 percent of the Dominican labor force (compared to 7.6 percent of the labor force in Spain), services and other activities offered to households, which employs an additional 11.9 percent of Dominican workers (2.1 percent for Spain as a whole). and administrative activities and auxiliary services, where 11.1 percent of Dominicans worked (6.6% for Spain in general). On the other hand, Dominicans are underrepresented in the manufacturing industry, where 5.6 percent work, compared to 10.7 percent for Spain, and in public administrations, where only 1 percent of Dominicans work compared to 7.1 percent of the population in Spain.

Table 24
Occupational distribution of workers in Spain, 2021
Persons in the labor force

Occupation	Dominicans	Spain
Directors and managers, professionals, technicians, and administrators	12.0%	39.6%
Occupations in the service sector	63.8%	33.3%
Operators, mechanics, assemblers, machinists, and laborers	19.3%	21.3%
Agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and mining	4.9%	5.8%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

Table 25
Occupational distribution by sex, 2021
Persons in the labor force

Occupation	Dominicans		Spain	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Directors and managers, professionals, technicians, and administrators	12.8%	11.3%	36.0%	43.8%
Service sector occupations	43.6	82.4	22.2	46.0
Operators, mechanics, assemblers, machinists, and laborers	38.7	4.8	34.1	6.8
Agriculture, fishing, forestry, and mining	4.9	1.5	7.7	3.4

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

Table 26
Distribution of the labor force by specific employment activity
2021
Employed persons 16 years of age or older

Activity	Dominicans	Spain overall
Hospitality services	26.6%	7.6%
Services and activities offered to households	11.9%	2.1%
Administrative activities and auxiliary services	11.1%	6.6%
Wholesale trade	11.0%	16.7%
Health and social service activities	8.5%	8.4%
Construction	6.3%	6.6%
Manufacturing	5.6%	10.7%
Other service activities	4.8%	2.8%
Transport	4.5%	5.0%
Information, communications, finance, and real estate	2.5%	5.8%
Professional, technical and scientific	2.0%	5.7%
Agriculture, mining and fishing	1.4%	4.9%
Arts & entertainment	1.3%	2.0%
Public administration	1.0%	7.1%
Other activities	1.5%	8.0%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

As shown in Table 27, when the occupational distribution is broken down by sex, the predominant activity among the Dominican workforce in 2021 continues to be hospitality services, although with a higher concentration among women --28.3 percent of whom work in this sector, compared to 24.4 percent of men. There is, however, a significant difference based on gender in the other occupational activities. For women, the services and activities offered to households (the so-called domestic services sector) represent the second highest in terms of employment (with 19.8 percent), while for men it is the construction sector, which represents 14 percent of male employment. However, construction has fallen considerably since 2011 as a source of employment among Dominican men, due --as explained earlier-- to the economic crisis of 2008 to 2014. As Table 27 shows, among employed Dominican men, almost 30 percent were employed in the construction sector in 2011, about twice as much as in 2021.

Table 27
Distribution of the Dominican Labor Force
by main employment activity category and sex
2011-2021
Employed persons aged 16 years or older

Occupancy	2011	2021
	Men	
Hospitality services	10.2%	24.4%
Construction	28.9%	14.0%
Wholesale trade	10.9%	13.4%
Manufacturing industry	10.5%	9.6%
Administrative activities and auxiliary services	4.4%	9.6%
Transport	4.2%	8.6%
Health and social services activities	4.1%	3.4%
Other Services activities	4.1%	4.3%
Services and activities offered to households	1.6%	1.3%
Other activities	21.1%	11.4%
	Women	
Hospitality services	33.2%	28.3%
Services and activities offered to households	20.6%	19.8%
Administrative activities and auxiliary services	6.1%	12.3%
Health and social services activities	10.0%	12.3%
Wholesale trade	7.7%	9.1%
Other Services activities	6.2%	5.1%
Manufacturing industry	3.6%	2.7%
Transport	1.2%	1.6%
Construction	2.8%	0.6%
Other activities	8.6%	8.2%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain 2011 and 2021. Authors' tabulations.

There are different types of workforce participation. The most common is as a salaried worker, which includes people who work – in the private or public sector, not at home – in exchange for a salary, wage, or some other form of direct payment. Then there are the self-employed, who perform work on their own, remunerated as entrepreneurs or independent entities. Third, there are household or domestic workers, which include persons (not companies or other entities) who provide services to a particular household in exchange for a salary in cash and/or in kind, such as butlers, housekeepers, cleaners, nannies, gardeners, and chauffeur. Finally, there are other labor arrangements – such as cooperatives – but these constitute a tiny percentage in Spain (about 0.2 per cent), especially among the immigrant population.

What type of employment arrangements do Dominican immigrants concentrate on? Table 28 presents the decomposition. Most of them hold salaried positions in the private sector or in the government. Among Dominican men, 66.6 percent were employed in salaried positions in 2021, while for women it constituted 62.7 percent. Both figures are lower than those for Spain overall, especially for women. In Spain, salaried workers make up 68.7 percent of male employment and 68.4 percent among women.

Dominicans have a lower rate of self-employment than the overall workforce in Spain. In 2021, only 9.6 percent of Dominican men were self-employed compared to 17.5 percent of men in Spain overall, and only 6.7 percent of Dominican women were self-employed compared to 11.3 percent among women in Spain. On the other hand, Dominicans were overrepresented in the household and domestic workers sector, where 23.8 percent of Dominican men and 31.2 percent of women worked, compared to 13.8 percent of men and 20.3 percent of women in Spain overall.

Table 28

**Types of employment, by sex, 2021
Employed persons 16 years of age or older**

Category	Dominicans		Spain overall	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Self-employment	9.6%	6.7%	17.5%	11.3%
Salaried work	66.6%	62.0%	68.7%	68.4%
Domestic/household worker, member of a cooperative, and others	23.8%	31.2%	13.8%	20.3%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

Salaries

How do the average salaries of Dominican immigrants compare with those of the rest of overall workforce in Spain? The INE's Population and Housing Census database does not offer figures on salaries. The National Salary Structure Survey of Spain does offer this information, but it only collects data for immigrants by country groups (Africa, Asia, America, etc.). However, based on the data available for the Americas and adjusting for the difference in the educational level of the Dominican immigrant population compared to that of the Americas in general (which is lower and has a significant impact on the average salary), we have constructed salary estimates for Dominican immigrants.³⁰

According to our estimates, Dominican workers earn considerably lower salaries than the overall workforce in Spain. As presented in Table 29, we estimate that the average annual salary of Dominican immigrant workers in 2021 was €15,653, compared to €25,896 for workers in Spain overall. When disaggregated into various demographic/national origin groups, we find that workers born in Spain receive the highest average annual salaries, equal to €26,428 in 2021, followed by immigrants born in the European Union – outside Spain – whose average salary was €22,638 in 2021. Immigrants born in the Americas – mostly from Latin America – had an average salary of €16,747.

Note that the wage gap between workers born in the Dominican Republic and those born in Spain is wide, with workers born in Spain receiving an average salary 65.5 percent higher than that of Dominicans.

Table 29
Average annual gross salaries by sex, 2021
In euros

	Total	Male	Female
Average salary, Spain	€25,896	€23,176	€28,389
Born in Spain	26,428	23,623	29,041
Persons born in the European Union (excluding Spain)	22,638	19,888	25,442
Born in the Americas	16,747	14,536	18,771
Born in the Dominican Republic	15,653	13,862	17,729

Source: Annual Salary Structure Survey of Spain, 2021. Figures for Dominican immigrants are estimates by the authors.

³⁰ We emphasize that these figures are an estimate and are subject to a margin of error

There is a wide range of variables that explain these salary differentials, including educational attainment, profession and occupation, age and work experience, Spanish language proficiency, geographical location within Spain, and number of years of residence in Spain, among others.³¹ The person's gender is one of the key factors.

The gender pay gap is substantial. As Table 29 shows, we estimate that Dominican female workers earned an annual average of €13,862 in 2021, while Dominican men received €17,729. Based on these figures, the average salary of Dominican women was 78.2 percent of that of men. This is of utmost importance when examining the overall situation of Dominicans because, as noted earlier, there is a high proportion of women among the Dominican population in Spain. Note also that the data in Table 29 shows the gender pay gap exists among all demographics. For Spain as a whole, the average gross salary for women was 81.6 per cent of that for men. A variety of factors can explain these sex wage differentials, including occupational segregation, variations in full-time versus part-time employment, gender wage discrimination, and others.³²

V. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS

There is ample evidence showing that increased educational attainment is an engine of income growth.³³ The economic returns to education are reflected in the substantial average salary differences that exist by level of schooling completed. Table 30 presents the average annual gross salaries received in 2021 by persons 16 years of age and over in Spain, differentiated by those who had completed (1) some primary education or less (including illiterates), (2) some secondary education, which includes persons who had managed to reach the lower or upper stages of secondary education (whether general or professional) or had post-secondary—but not higher education—studies (such as vocational programs) and (3) some type of tertiary education (higher education), including those with university degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.

Table 30 also shows the average gross monthly salaries for various occupations, some requiring higher education (directors, managers, technicians and professionals) and others with lower requirements in terms of the level of schooling (the so-called elementary occupations, which include domestic and household workers, unskilled jobs in the hospitality industry, agricultural laborers, construction workers, and others).

As can be seen, educational attainment has a substantial impact on salaries. Acquiring some form of higher education carries an average gross monthly salary of €2,606, compared to €1,659 for those who have completed only some level of secondary education, and €1,290 for those with primary education or less. Occupations with greater academic requirements also offer higher wages. In 2021, the average monthly salary for directors and managers was €4,454, among technicians and professionals it was €3,128, and for elementary occupations it was only €1,308.

³¹ For the role of education and other variables in explaining the lower average salaries of immigrants in Spain, see Leguina Herrán, (2023), Amuedo-Dorantes and De La Rica (2007), Swedberg González (2010), and Garrido and Toharia (2003), among others. For other countries: see Duleep, Liu, and Regets (2022), Beyrer (2016), and Rivera-Batiz (1999, 2007).

³² In the case of Spain, see: Equality and Diversity Commission (2019), Ministry of Labor, Migration and Social Security (2018), Las Heras (2017), Guner, Kaya, and Sánchez-Marcos (2014), de Cabo Serrano and Garzón (2007), Amuedo-Dorantes and de la Rica (2006), and De la Rica and Ugidos (1995). For other countries, see Hurst and Fry (2023), Das and Kotikula (2019), Redmond and McGuinness (2017), Blau and Kahn (2016), Bolotnikova (2016) and Arulampalam, Booth, and Bryan (2007).

³³ In Spain, it is estimated that an additional year of education can increase wages by around 8 per cent (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2018, Alba-Ramírez and San Segundo (1995); see also Arrazola and de Hevia (2008) and García Prieto, Martín and Pérez (2005). For a general discussion of the topic, see Hanushek and Woessmann (2021), World Bank (2018), Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2018), Prados de la Escosura and Rosés (2010), and Rivera-Batiz (2009).

Table 30
Average gross monthly salaries by educational attainment, 2021
Persons 16 years of age or older

Educational attainment and occupation	Gross monthly salary, in euros
Educational attainment	
Primary education or less	€1,290
Secondary education (lower or upper levels)	€1,659
Higher education	€2,606
Occupation	
Directors and managers	€4,454
Technicians and professionals	€3,128
Elementary occupations	€1,308

Source: Active Population Survey, INE, 2023.

There is also a close link between the level of education completed and the probability of being unemployed. Table 31 shows the average unemployment rate among Dominican immigrants in Spain by level of education in 2021. It shows that workers with less schooling tend to have higher unemployment rates.

More specifically: for Dominican immigrants between 16 and 64 years of age with primary education or less, the unemployment rate was 60.8 percent in 2021; for those with lower-level secondary education, the unemployment rate falls to 33.4 per cent; for those with upper secondary education it drops to 28.5 percent; and for those with higher education (tertiary education) the unemployment rate was 21.9 percent.

The strong relationship between educational attainment and the likelihood of employment has been confirmed in studies that include other determinants of unemployment.³⁴

³⁴ See Navarro Gómez and Rueda Narváez (2018) and Amuedo-Dorantes, and De La Rica (2007).

Table 31
Unemployment rate by educational attainment
Dominican immigrants in Spain, 2021
Persons in the labor force aged 16-64

Educational attainment	Unemployment rate
Dominican immigrants overall	30.2%
Primary education or less	60.8%
Lower-level secondary education	33.4%
Upper-level secondary education	28.5%
Higher education (tertiary education)	21.9%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

Given the close connection of both wages and occupational status with schooling: what is the educational attainment of Dominican immigrants in Spain? Table 32 presents the level of schooling completed by Dominican immigrants aged 25 and over, compared with those for the overall population in Spain. The educational categories are subdivided into: (1) primary education or less (includes illiterates), (2) secondary education, which includes persons who have reached the lower or upper levels of secondary education (with either general or professional orientation) as well as those with post-secondary but not higher education studies (such as vocational programs), and (3) higher education, which includes those with tertiary education, including those with university degrees or diplomas as well as anyone with a master's or doctorate degree.

Dominican immigrants have an average level of schooling considerably lower than the overall population in Spain. For example, the proportion of Dominican immigrants aged 25 or older with higher education (tertiary education) was 17.2 percent in 2021, compared to 29.5 percent in Spain.

Table 32 also shows that the average educational attainment of Dominican immigrants is increasing, but slowly. The percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 25 and over who had completed secondary education rose from 56.5 percent in 2011 to 61.2 percent in 2021. And the percentage of Dominican immigrants with tertiary education increased by only about two percentage points between 2011 and 2021, from 14.9 percent to 17.2 percent, compared to an increase of nine percentage points among the overall population in Spain, for whom the percentage who had attained tertiary education rose from 20.3 to 29.5 percent.

Table 32

**Educational Attainment
Dominican immigrants vs. Spain overall
Persons 25 years of age or older**

Population group	Percentage of the population with:		
	Primary education or less	Secondary education (Lower or Upper)	Tertiary education (Higher education)
2011			
Dominican immigrants	28.6%	56.5%	14.9%
Spain overall	27.2%	52.5%	20.3%
2021			
Dominican immigrants	21.6%	61.2%	17.2%
Spain overall	23.1%	47.4%	29.5%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2011 and 2021. Authors' tabulations.

There are significant differences in educational attainment based on gender. Table 33 presents the distribution of the population aged 25 years and over by their highest level of education in 2021, disaggregated by gender. The percentage of Dominican immigrant women who had attained higher education (tertiary education) was equal to 18.3 percent compared to 15.3 percent for men. There is also an educational gap favoring women in Spain overall. In 2021, 31.5 per cent of women in Spain had attained higher education, compared to 27.5 per cent among men.

The literature on this subject recognizes that the higher female educational attainment derives in large part from the persistent gender wage gap. To achieve salaries comparable to those of men, women must raise their levels of schooling above those of men, to compensate for the disadvantage caused by the gender pay gap. As Nobel laureate economist Claudia Goldin and her co-authors point out: "According to most available estimates, the wage premium for university education is higher for women than for men... women have responded to this higher economic remuneration, which in fact has increased to a relative and absolute degree in recent decades."³⁵

But even though the economic return from investing in education is greater for women, the process of access to higher levels of education has been gradual and is the outcome of a combination of social, economic, cultural and political transformations, whether in Spain, the Dominican Republic, or other countries. As Professor Goldin and her co-authors point out for the case of the United States: "the increase in women's enrollment in higher education responded to (1) changes in social norms and expectations of women's role in work, marriage, and motherhood; (2) increased legal protections through workplace fairness; and (3) the availability of effective birth control methods. In short: a broader level of opportunity allowed young women to prosper and take advantage of the higher economic returns of higher education."³⁶

³⁵ Goldin, Katz and Kuziemko (2006), p. 153); see also Leukhima and Smaldone (2022).

³⁶ Goldin, Katz and Kuziemko (2006, p. 154).

Table 33
Educational attainment of Dominican immigrants, by sex, 2021
Persons 25 years of age or older

Population group	Percentage in educational category		
	Total	Men	Women
Dominican immigrants			
Primary education or less	21.6%	19.8%	22.7%
Lower-level secondary education	31.0%	33.4%	29.6%
Upper-level secondary education	30.2%	31.5%	29.4%
Higher education (tertiary education)	17.2%	15.3%	18.3%
Spain overall			
Primary education or less	23.1%	23.0%	23.2%
Lower-level secondary education	29.3%	31.1%	27.4%
Upper-level secondary education	18.1%	18.4%	18.0%
Higher education (tertiary education)	29.5%	27.5%	31.5%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2021. Authors' tabulations.

What about the schooling of the younger generation? Table 34 shows the distribution of activities engaged by persons aged less than 25 years, subdivided into two groups: 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years old. The activities are student only (full-time enrollment in a school or university), employed, unemployed, and others (neither in school nor in the labor force). Note that those in the labor force (employed or unemployed) could be also part-time students, which will be discussed later. The “other” category, however, excludes any enrollment in educational institutions or in the labor force.

The percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 20 to 24 whose only activity was studying in colleges or universities in 2021 was very low, equal to 8.8 percent, and did not increase significantly since 2011, when it was 8.0 percent. The corresponding percentage for the overall population of Spain was much higher: in 2021 it was equal to 31.7 percent, and grew significantly from 2011, when it was 25.4 percent.

There is another worrying trend as well. The percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 20 to 24 who are neither students (whether full-time or part-time) nor in the labor force soared from 9.2 percent in 2011 to 36.2 percent in 2021. It is a general trend that is also observed among this age group in Spain overall, where the percentage that neither studies nor participates in the labor force grew from 10.5 percent in 2011 to 22.9 percent in 2021. The other side of this coin is that the percentage of youth in this age group who have joined the labor market, whether employed or looking for work, has fallen considerably, as Table 34 shows.

Looking at the population aged 15 to 19, the percentage of Dominican immigrants who were enrolled full-time in secondary or higher education rose substantially, from 43.8 percent in 2011 to 56.8 percent in 2021. Still, this percentage is much lower than that for the overall population of Spain where the percentage of 15- to 19-year-olds enrolled full-time in a school or university rose from 65.6 percent in 2011 to 82.2 percent in 2021. In addition, the percentage who is neither attending school/university (whether full-time or part-time) nor in the labor force among Dominican immigrants aged 15 to 19 rose from 14.3 percent to 29 percent, while in Spain this percentage *fell* from 15.1 percent to 10.1 percent.

Table 34
Distribution of Youth activities
2011-2021
Persons 15 to 24 years old

Age Group	15 to 19	20 to 24	15 to 19	20 to 24
2011				
	Dominican immigrants		Spain	
Student only (college/university)	43.8%	8.0%	65.6%	25.4%
Employed (employed)	7.1%	28.5%	4.1%	30.0%
Unemployed (unemployed)	34.8%	54.3%	15.2%	34.1%
Other	14.3%	9.2%	15.1%	10.5%
2021				
	Dominican immigrants		Spain	
Student only (college/university)	56.8%	8.8%	82.2%	31.7%
Employed (employed)	6.9%	37.2%	4.1%	34.0%
Unemployed (unemployed)	7.2%	17.8%	3.6%	11.4%
Other	29.1%	36.2%	10.1%	22.9%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain 2011 and 2021. Authors' tabulations.

The differences noted earlier in full-time enrollment rates between Dominicans immigrant youth and the corresponding population in Spain overall hold as well when the data is decomposed by sex. As Table 35 shows, for the 15 to 19 age group, the percentage of females born in the Dominican Republic whose only activity was attending a school or university in 2021 was 59.7 percent, compared to 53.7 percent for males. Among the 20-24 age group, only 10.2 percent of women and 7.4 percent of men born in the Dominican Republic were full-time students.

The corresponding figures are much higher for the overall population of Spain in each corresponding age group. As Table 35 displays, for the 15 to 19 age cohort, the percentage of females in Spain overall whose only activity was attending a school or university in 2021 was 86.5 percent, compared to 83.1 percent for males. Among the 20-24 age group, 38.4 percent of women and 33.7 percent of men in Spain overall were enrolled full-time in schools and universities.

Table 35

Percentage of youth whose only activity was enrollment in a school or university, by sex, 2021

Persons 15 to 24 years old

Age Group	15 to 19	20 to 24	15 to 19	20 to 24
	Females		Males	
Dominican immigrants	59.7%	10.2%	53.7%	7.4%
Spain overall	86.5%	38.4%	83.1%	33.7%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021). Authors' tabulations.

The involvement of the young population in schooling is underestimated by the figures presented in Tables 34 and 35. The category “student only” in that table includes persons whose only activity was enrollment in a school or university (full-time students). But those in the labor force, whether employed or unemployed, could also, at the same time, be enrolled in school, as part-time students.

Table 36 shows the percentage of youth who were in the labor force and, at the same time, enrolled (part-time) in schools or universities in 2021. The percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 20 to 24 who were part-time students in addition to participating in the labor force was 6.7 percent. Adding this to those whose only activity was being in school (8.8 percent among Dominican immigrants in 2021), leads to a total of 15.5 percent enrolled in schools/universities. The percentage of those in the labor force who were also part-time students is higher in Spain overall, equal to 11.7 percent. When added to the student-only category (31.7 percent) the sum is 43.4 percent full-time and part-time students in Spain overall.

For the younger age cohort, 15 to 19 years of age, Table 36 shows that the percentage of Dominican immigrants in the labor force who were also studying in 2021 was 3.6 percent, which when added to the 56.8 percent whose only activity was enrollment in school/universities, adds up to a 60.4 percent total school enrollment rate. The involvement of those in the labor force in education was slightly lower in Spain overall, equal to 3.4 percent in 2021, which when added to the 82.2 percent whose only activity was enrollment in school adds up to a total of 86.6 percent of the age group involved in schooling.

Table 36
Youth enrolled in educational institutions full-time and part-time, 2021
Persons 15 to 24 years old

Age Group	15 to 19	20 to 24	15 to 19	20 to 24
	Dominican immigrants		Spain	
Student only (college/university)	56.8%	8.8%	82.2%	31.7%
In the labor force, but also a student	3.9%	6.7%	3.4%	11.7%
Total enrolled in educational institutions	60.7%	15.5%	85.6%	43.4%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain 2011 and 2021. Authors' tabulations.

What explains the lower enrollment of Dominican immigrant children and youth in educational institutions? One of the most frequent factor discussed in the research on educational differences is the role played by family income: the children of families with higher income tend to have greater educational attainment.³⁷ This may be helpful in explaining the educational gap between Dominicans and the overall Spanish population, given the substantial socioeconomic gaps between these two populations, as identified earlier in this report.

Another set of forces affecting schooling is encompassed by the characteristics of the schools the children attend and the neighborhoods in which immigrants live. This includes not only the economic resources available to schools and the local community (libraries, preschool programs, the availability of daycare, etc.) but also teachers' attitudes toward immigrant students, the presence of gangs and violence in schools and neighborhoods, etc. Residential segregation or exclusion based on income, race, ethnicity, national origin, and religion can force immigrant populations and their children to live in neighborhoods offering more limited educational and economic opportunities. In Spain, a 2022 study finds that "31% of ethnic and racial minorities surveyed perceived discrimination in access to housing during the last year" (Ministry of Equality, 2022, authors' translation). Given the shortage of housing and its rising cost (to be discussed in the next section), this is an issue of utmost importance for Dominican immigrants and their children.

Racial discrimination, xenophobia, and negative attitudes towards immigrants are phenomena that exist in many countries receiving immigrants. Although most Spaniards publicly express favorable views towards immigration, when asked more specific questions about immigrants and their possible repercussions – on the labor market, public finances, public safety, etc. – the opinions become more negative. A recent study carried out in Spain concludes that 52 percent of the interviewed sample expressed negative attitudes towards immigration or immigrants (González-Enríquez, Mariscal-de-Gante, & Rinken, 2024). In general, however, these opinions vary by location, educational attainment, and age of those surveyed, as well as the specific immigrant group considered.³⁸ Furthermore, a large part of the children of immigrants in Spain do

³⁷ For the case of Spain, see Portes and Aparicio (2013), Portes, Aparicio, and Haller (2018).

³⁸ For the case of Spain see González-Enríquez, Mariscal-de-Gante, and Rinken (2024) and Rinken (2021); for countries of the European Union in general, see Gang and Rivera-Batiz (1994) and Gang, Rivera-Batiz and Yun (2013).

not express having been subjected to discrimination. For example, according to the results of Portes, Aparicio, and Haller (2018), when young children of immigrants were asked if they had had a perception of discrimination or rejection in Spain, 52 percent answered never, 37.8 percent "sometimes," and 5.1 percent "many times."

Ethnic and racial stereotypes can also affect the attitudes of teachers –and official authorities, such as the police-- towards immigrant students. For example, the fact that two of the most renowned gangs in Spain have names associated with the Dominican population has led the press and the public to automatically link Dominican immigrants with these gangs, even though its members include diverse populations and constitute a tiny part of Dominican youth.³⁹

VI. POVERTY AMONG DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS

The previous sections have presented a detailed profile of the demographic, employment, and educational aspects of the Dominican immigrant population in Spain. But to determine the standard of living of a population, it is also necessary to examine the cost of living. And the most significant of these costs is housing, especially for Dominicans, who are an immigrant population whose location is mostly urban, concentrated in cities like Madrid and Barcelona.

Large cities in Spain are experiencing a surge of residential rental prices. These increases respond to a shortage in the supply of rental housing and an expansion in demand linked to a growing urban population and booming tourism. As a result, as the Bank of Spain recently points out: "problems of access to affordable housing have intensified in recent years and are concentrated in low-income households, young people, immigrant populations, and in certain geographical areas (urban and tourist zones) with the effect that 50% of Spanish households residing in rental housing are at risk of poverty (Gavilán, Bank of Spain, Annual Report, 2023, authors' translation). The burden imposed by the soaring cost of living on low-income urban populations has been identified in other countries as well. As Moretti and Diamond (2022) conclude for the case of the United States: "for those who have a college degree, more expensive cities offer higher income that compensate for the high cost of living. But for those with less education, more expensive cities offer a standard of living that is consistently lower than cities with more affordable cost of living."

For the Dominican population in Spain, whose educational attainment is substantially lower than the country's average, have lower salaries, and higher unemployment rates, the spiraling cost of urban rental housing has had a markedly negative impact on their standard of living. As Table 37 shows, in 2021 nearly half of Dominicans resided in rental housing, compared to 16 percent among the general population of Spain. The percentage of Dominican immigrants housed in rental units is even higher than among the overall immigrant population of Spain, 37.9 percent of whom were residing in rental units in 2021.

³⁹ The gangs are Dominican Don't Play and Trinitarios. How stereotypes affect young people's school performance has been investigated by Núñez Castillo (2022).

Table 37
Housing tenure status, 2021

Demographic Group	Rental	Owner	Other
Spain, total	16.0%	76.4%	7.6%
Population Born in Spain	12.1%	80.0%	7.9%
Foreign-born population	37.9%	50.9%	11.2%
Persons born in the Dominican Republic	48.2%	40.8%	11.0%

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain, 2022. Authors' tabulations.

The deteriorating rental housing situation and the greater cost of living in urban areas, together with the specific demographic, labor force and educational characteristics of the Dominican population in Spain, have resulted in a higher poverty rate relative to the overall population in the country. How can this be measured? The Spanish Living Conditions Survey (SLCS) offers data on poverty rates in the country based on an indicator that establishes the percentage of people at risk of living in poverty. The income threshold adopted by this survey to calculate whether a person is at risk of living in poverty is equal to 60 per cent of the median annual per capita income in the country (OECD scale), taking account of the distribution of income in the population.

According to the results of the SLCS, presented in Table 38, the percentage of persons at risk of poverty is higher for: (1) people with foreign nationality (63.2 per cent for the foreign-born compared to 13.3 per cent for those of Spanish nationality), (2) those under 16 years of age (29 percent among those under 16 years of age, compared to 20.4 percent for those in the 16 to 64 year old range, and 10 percent for persons 64 and older), (3) persons with lower educational attainment (poverty rate of about 23 percent for those with primary or secondary education compared to 9.2 percent for those with tertiary education), and (4) the unemployed (38.5 percent risk of poverty among the unemployed relative to only 13.3 percent for the employed).

The SLCS does not provide data disaggregated by country of birth. But based on the characteristics of the Dominican population relative to the population of Spain in general, as established in this report, our estimate is that about 40 percent of the Dominican population was at risk of poverty in 2021, compared to 17.3 percent for the population of Spain as a whole.

Table 38

Persons living at risk of poverty, various demographic groups, 2021

Population group	Percentage living at risk of poverty
Total, Spain	17.3%
Persons born in the Dominican Republic*	38.8%
Spanish citizens	13.3%
Foreign citizens (from the European Union)	34.8%
Foreign citizens (outside the European Union)	59.0%
Persons under 16 years of age	29.0%
Persons between 16 and 64 years of age	20.4%
Persons over 64 years of age	10.0%
Primary education or less	22.9%
Lower-level secondary education	23.0%
Upper-level secondary school	18.8%
Higher education (tertiary)	9.2%
Employed	13.3%
Unemployed	38.5%
Retired	8.0%
Others out of the labor force	23.7%

* The figure for persons born in the Dominican Republic is an estimate based on a breakdown of the data from the 2021 Spanish Living Conditions Survey by nationality, age, educational attainment, and labor force status, and applying these to the corresponding characteristics among the Dominican population as obtained from the 2021 Population and Housing Census in Spain.

In the Living Conditions survey, the income used to calculate the poverty rate corresponds to the previous year. The poverty line: used is 60 per cent of the median annual income per unit of consumption (modified OECD scale), taking account of the country's income distribution. Income per unit of consumption is obtained by dividing the total household income by the number of consumption units.

Source: Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021) and Living Conditions Survey (2021). Authors' tabulations and estimates.

VII. DOMINICANS BORN IN SPAIN

The number of Dominicans residing in Spain in the year 2024 was 269,356. This figure includes the 201,162 persons born in the Dominican Republic, whose detailed profile has been presented in previous sections. But, in addition, we estimate that there are 68,194 persons born in Spain with at least one parent born in the Dominican Republic, who should be considered – based on the extensive literature on the subject – as part of the Dominican population in Spain due to their ethnic, social, and cultural identification with this country. This section provides a detailed description of this population.

There is no previous analysis of the Dominican population born in Spain. In fact, several experts on Dominican migration to Spain have mentioned the lack of data on this population.⁴⁰ This is the first report to present such information.

The Dominican population born in Spain is very young and this makes it demographically different from the Dominican immigrant population. Table 39 presents the age distribution of Dominicans born in Spain compared to that of the immigrant population. Among those born in Spain, 95 percent were under the age of 25 in 2024, compared with 18.1 percent among immigrants. In fact, most Dominicans born in Spain are less than 10 years old, comprising 56.4 percent of the total, compared to only 1.7 percent among immigrants.

Table 39
Age distribution of the Dominican population in Spain, 2024
Born in Spain versus born in the Dominican Republic

Demographic group	Born in Spain	%	Born in the Dominican Republic	%
Total population	68,194	100.0%	201,162	100.0%
0 to 9 years	38,461	56.4	3,422	1.7
10 to 14 years	16,639	24.4	4,799	2.4
15 to 19 years	6,819	10.0	9,443	4.7
20 to 24 years	2,864	4.2	18,805	9.3
25 years or older	3,411	5.0	164,693	81.9

Source: For the immigrant population: INE, Population of Spain (2024). For those born in Spain: estimate for 2024 based on data from the INE, Continuous Household Survey, (2020). Authors' tabulations.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Dominican immigrants in Spain is the large proportion of women. However, Table 40 shows that, as is to be expected, the distribution of the Dominican population born in Spain is almost equally divided based on sex. In 2024, 49.2 percent of Dominicans born in Spain were female, compared to 59.3 percent among immigrants.

⁴⁰ For example, the Dominican Republic's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Dominican Communities Abroad, Carlos de la Mota, in an interview, recently noted that published statistical data on the size of the Dominican population in Spain are inaccurate precisely because they do not count Dominicans born in Spain (see *El Diario*, 2024).

Table 40

**Dominican population: Born in Spain vs. born in the Dominican Republic
By sex, 2024**

Population group	Female	%	Male	%
Total Dominican population	152,142	56.5%	117,214	43.5%
Born in Spain	33,551	49.2	34,643	50.8
Born in the Dominican Republic	118,591	59.0	82,571	41.0

Source: For the immigrant population: INE, Population and Housing Census in Spain (2024). For those born in Spain: projection for 2024 based on data from INE, Continuous Household Survey (2020). Authors' tabulations.

Another major difference between the Dominican population born in Spain and that born in the Dominican Republic is education: the population born in Spain shows much more favorable indicators. Given that 95 percent of Dominicans born in Spain were under 25 years of age in 2021, Table 41 presents the distribution of the various activities of this young population, disaggregated into two five-year age groups: 15 to 19 years old and 20 to 24 years old. The activities are separated into: (1) enrolled full-time in a school or university (full-time students), (2) employed, (3) unemployed, and (4) others, that is those who are neither in the labor force nor enrolled in a school or university.

As Table 41 shows, in 2021 the percentage of Dominicans born in Spain between the ages of 15 and 19 enrolled as full-time students was 77.8 percent, much higher than the 56.8 percent for those born in the Dominican Republic. Both figures are lower than the corresponding one for the overall population of Spain, which, as Table 41 presents, was 84.7 percent in 2021. However, the shortfall is much less for Dominicans born in Spain when compared to Dominican immigrants.

For the 20 to 24 age cohort, the percentage of Dominicans born in Spain enrolled as full-time students was 24.7 percent in 2021, almost three times higher than the 8.8 percent corresponding to Dominican immigrants. Both figures are again below the corresponding one for the overall population of Spain, which was 35.9 percent in 2021. But the educational gap between Dominicans born in Spain and the overall population in Spain is not as substantial as that prevailing for Dominican immigrants.

There is a substantial difference in the proportion of Spain-born Dominican youth who were enrolled full-time in a school or university by sex. As Table 42 displays, for the group aged 15 to 19, the percentage of Dominicans born in Spain who were full-time students in 2021 was 80.2 percent for females, compared to 75.4 percent for males. For the 20 to 24 age group, 26.6 percent of Dominican women born in Spain were full-time students, while among men it was 23.1 percent. The differences noted earlier between Dominicans born in Spain and those born in the Dominican Republic hold as well when the data is decomposed by sex. As Table 42 shows, for the 15 to 19 age group, the percentage of females born in the Dominican Republic whose only activity was attending a school or university in 2021 was 59.7 percent, compared to 53.7 percent for males. Among the 20-24 age group, only 10.2 percent of women and 7.4 percent of men born in the Dominican Republic were full-time students, figures which are abysmally lower than those for Dominicans born in Spain.

Table 41
Activities engaged by youth, 2021
Dominicans born in Spain and those born in the Dominican Republic vs. Spain overall
Persons 15 to 24 years of age

Activity	Age Group	
	15 to 19	20 to 24
Dominicans Born in Spain		
Full-time student (college/university)	77.8%	24.7%
Employed	3.7%	35.6%
Unemployed	4.4%	14.6%
Other	14.1%	25.1%
Dominican immigrants in Spain		
Full-time student (college/university)	56.8%	8.8%
Employed	6.9%	37.1%
Unemployed	7.2%	17.9%
Other	29.1%	36.2%
Overall Spain		
Full-time student (college/university)	82.2%	31.7%
Employed	4.1%	34.0%
Unemployed	3.6%	11.4%
Other	10.1%	22.9%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021). For Dominicans born in Spain: authors' estimates based on the INE, Census of Population and Housing of Spain (2021)

Table 42

Percentage of youth whose only activity was enrollment in a school or university, by sex, 2021
Born in Spain versus born in the Dominican Republic
Persons 15 to 24 years old

Age Group	Females		Males	
	15 to 19	20 to 24	15 to 19	20 to 24
Dominicans born in Spain	80.2%	26.6%	75.4%	23.1%
Dominican immigrants	59.7%	10.2%	53.7%	7.4%
Spain overall	86.5%	38.4%	83.1%	33.7%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021). For Dominicans born in Spain: authors' estimates based on the INE, Census of Population and Housing of Spain (2021)

How do the full-time school/university enrollment figures for Dominicans born in Spain compare with those of the overall population in Spain? As shown in Table 42, the lower school/university enrollment among Dominican youth compared to Spain overall continues to hold when decomposed by sex, although the gap is much smaller for Dominicans born in Spain. For the overall female population in Spain aged 15 to 19, the percentage whose only activity was being enrolled in a school or university in 2021 was 86.5 percent, and it was 83.1 percent for males, compared to 80.2 percent and 75.4 percent, respectively, for Dominicans born in Spain. Among the Dominican immigrant population, the corresponding figures are much smaller. For Dominican immigrants aged 15 to 19, only 59.7 percent of females and 53.7 percent of males were full-time students, compared to 59.7 percent and 53.7 percent respectively for those born in the Dominican Republic.

For the 20-24 age group, the full-time school/university enrollment rate in Spain overall was 38.4 percent for women and 33.7 percent for men were, while for Dominicans born in Spain, the corresponding figures were 26.6 percent, and 23.1 percent respectively. For Dominican immigrants, however, the figures are much lower: 10.2 percent among women and 7.4 percent for men.

Table 43 shows the percentage of youth who were in the labor force and, at the same time, enrolled (part-time) in schools or universities in 2021. The percentage of Dominicans born in Spain aged 20 to 24 who were part-time students in addition to participating in the labor force was 14.1 percent. Adding this to those whose only activity was being in school (24.7 percent among Dominican born in Spain in 2021), leads to a total of 38.8 percent enrolled in schools/universities. This figure is lower compared to Spain overall, whose part-time enrollment was equal to 11.7 percent for those aged 20 to 24. When added to the student-only category (31.7 percent) the sum is 43.4 percent school/university enrollment in Spain overall.

For the younger age cohort, 15 to 19 years of age, Table 43 shows that the percentage of Dominicans born in Spain who were actively involved in the labor force but who were also studying in 2021 was 3.8 percent, which when added to the 77.8 percent whose only activity was enrollment in school/universities, adds up to an 81.6 percent total school enrollment rate. For Spain overall, the percentage of those in the labor force who were also enrolled (part-time) in schools and universities was equal to 3.4 percent in 2021, which when added to the 82.2 percent whose only activity was enrollment in school adds up to a total of 86.6 percent of the age group involved in schooling

Table 43
Youth enrolled in educational institutions full-time and part-time, 2021

Persons 15 to 24 years old

Age Group	15 to 19	20 to 24
Dominicans born in Spain		
Student only (college/university)	77.8%	24.7%
In the labor force, but also a student	3.8%	14.1%
Total enrolled in educational institutions	81.6%	38.8%
Dominican immigrants		
Student only (college/university)	56.8%	8.8%
In the labor force, but also a student	3.9%	6.7%
Total enrolled in educational institutions	60.7%	15.5%
Spain		
Student only (college/university)	82.2%	31.7%
In the labor force, but also a student	3.4%	11.7%
Total enrolled in educational institutions	85.6%	43.4%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021). For Dominicans born in Spain: authors' estimates based on the INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021).

The differences based on sex that we have pointed out above hold up when considering both part-time and full-time students. For the 15 to 19 age group, Table 44 shows that the percentage of Dominican females born in Spain who participated in the labor force and at the same time were studying (part-time) was 3.7 percent in 2021. When added to the 80.3 percent who were full-time students, the result is 84.1 percent, which represents the total enrollment rate (full-time and part-time) of Dominican females born in Spain in the 15 to 19 age group. For the male population, the percentage who studied part-time was 3.8 per cent, and when added to the 76.9 per cent who studied full-time, the sum is a total enrollment rate equal to 80.7 per cent, which is lower than the corresponding rate among the female population. These figures are much higher than those prevailing among Dominican immigrants in the same age group, whose total enrollment rate in schools or universities (full-time and part-time) was 63.6 percent in 2021 for the female population and 57.5 percent for males. Furthermore, the total enrollment rate among Dominicans born in Spain approximates that of the population of Spain overall in this age group. For the latter, the total enrollment rate (full time plus part time) in 2021 was 87.7 percent for women and 84.1 percent for men. And note also that the total enrollment rate among Dominican women born in Spain in the 15 to 19 age group was the same as that for the overall male population in Spain in the same group: 84 percent.

Table 44
Youth enrolled in educational institutions, full-time and part-time, 2021
By sex
Persons 15 to 24 years old

Age group:	15 to 19 years		20 to 24 years	
	Dominicans born in Spain			
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Full-time students (colleges/universities)	80.3%	76.9%	26.7%	22.4%
In the labor force and part-time students	3.7%	3.8%	18.3%	10.1%
Total, enrolled in educational institutions	84.1%	80.7%	45.0%	32.5%
	Dominican immigrants			
Full-time students (colleges/universities)	59.7%	53.6%	10.4%	7.5%
In the labor force and part-time students	3.9%	3.9%	8.1%	5.2%
Total, enrolled in educational institutions	63.6%	57.5%	18.5%	12.7%
	Spain			
Full-time students (colleges/universities)	84.5%	80.5%	34.1%	29.2%
In the labor force and part-time students	3.2%	3.6%	13.2%	10.7%
Total, enrolled in educational institutions	87.7%	84.1%	47.3%	39.9%

Source: INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021). For Dominicans born in Spain: authors' estimates based on the INE, Population and Housing Census of Spain (2021).

Table 44 also shows the gender breakdown of full-time and part-time enrolment rates for the 20 to 24 age group in 2021. Among Dominican women in this age group, the percentage who participated in the labor force and were also enrolled part-time in a school or university was 18.3 percent. When added to the 26.7 percent whose only activity was being full-time students, the result is 45 percent, which represents the total percentage of Dominicans born in Spain in the 20 to 24 age group who were studying in schools or universities, either part-time or full-time. For the male population, the percentage who studied part-time was 10.1 per cent, and when added to the 22.4 per cent who studied full-time, the sum is 32.5 per cent who studied full-time and part-time in this age group, which is much lower than that prevailing among the female population. Both figures are higher than those for Dominican immigrants in the same age group, whose total enrollment rate in colleges or universities (full-time or part-time) in 2021 was 18.5 percent for women and 12.7 percent for men. In addition, the total enrollment rates among Dominicans born in Spain are close to those of the general population of Spain in this age group. For the latter, the total percentage enrolled in colleges or universities in 2021 was 47.3 percent for the female population and 39.9 percent for men. And it is notable that the total enrollment rate among Dominican women born in Spain aged 20 to 24 was significantly *higher* than that corresponding rate among males in Spain overall: 45 percent for Dominican women and approximately 40 percent for men in Spain.

The uptake from this analysis is that Dominicans born in Spain have school/university enrollment rates that are much higher than those prevailing among Dominicans immigrants in the same age groups and are instead closer to those prevailing in the overall Spanish population. What explains these differences? ⁴¹

One key factor is the fact that Dominican children and youth born in Spain have spent virtually all their lives residing in Spain while Dominican immigrants have spent fewer years as residents in that country. About 43 percent of Dominican immigrants between the ages of 15 and 24 in 2021 had arrived in Spain after 2015, meaning they had only been in the country for six years or less. This means that the immigrants have had less time to become familiar with the social and cultural environment in Spain, aside from the short-term psychological impact of moving to a new land, where the same circle of friends and family is no longer available. In addition to this, it is important to mention that the age at which the young immigrant arrives in Spain is another decisive factor in their adjustment to the country's education system. The younger the age of arrival, the more likely that she or he will succeed and persist academically.

Spanish nationality is another important factor. Having Spanish nationality opens doors, such as access to scholarships and public aid.⁴² And there is a significant difference in nationality rates between Dominicans born in Spain and those born in the Dominican Republic. Nearly 90 percent of Dominicans born in Spain possessed Spanish nationality in 2021, compared to 65.9 percent of those born abroad (63.9 percent among the 15 to 24 age group itself).

There is a great deal of debate about the educational and socioeconomic performance of the children of immigrants, especially those who are born in the host country.⁴³ The debate centers on whether they become more successful in terms of educational attainment and income than their parents. This is difficult to determine for the Dominican population in Spain because those born in that country are still very young (most are under 25 years of age and have not completed their schooling), but the data presented in this section indicate that there does seem to be substantial educational progress. This is consistent with evidence based on Dominican immigration to the United States, which shows that Dominicans born in the U.S.—especially females—not only surpass the educational attainment of their parents, but also approximate or exceed the rest of the country's population.⁴⁴

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The Dominican population in Spain has skyrocketed in recent decades and constitutes the second largest among Dominican diasporas in the world. The number of Dominicans residing in Spain in 2023 is estimated at 269,356. This figure includes 201,162 persons born in the Dominican Republic and an estimated 68,194 born in Spain with at least one parent born in the Dominican Republic. This research report has presented a detailed profile of the demographic and socioeconomic situation of both populations. The most recent data on Dominican immigrants in Spain were presented and, for the first time in the literature, a detailed profile of Dominicans born in Spain.

Rising immigration has been the most important factor in the surge of Dominicans in Spain, with the number of Dominican immigrants in the country growing by five times compared to 2001. This immigrant population consists disproportionately of women, who accounted for close to 60 percent of Dominican

⁴¹ It is worth mentioning that this is a result that is shared with other studies on the young immigrant population in Spain. See Álvarez Sotomayor, Martínez Cousinou, and Gutiérrez Rubio (2015).

⁴² See Enchautegui and Giannarelli (2015) and Cabral, Dore and Faxas (2004).

⁴³ The literature on this topic in the U.S. includes, among others, Gordon (1964), Gans (1992), Alba and Nee (2003), Waldinger and Feliciano (2004), Portes and Rumbaut (2001), Hirschman (2001), and Portes and Zhou (1993). For Spain, see Bayona-i-Carrasco and Domingo (2024), Portes, Aparicio and Haller (2018) and Portes (2014).

⁴⁴ See Hernández, Rivera-Batiz, and Sisay (2023), Itzigohn (2009), Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway (2008), Soy and Bosworth (2008), and Freedman (2005).

immigrants in 2024. However, the proportion of women among Spain's Dominican immigrant population has been declining, from about 70 percent in 2001 to about 60 percent in 2024. Dominican immigrants are also comparatively young compared to the population of Spain overall. But their median age has been rising, from 31 years in 2001 to 40 years old in 2024. Most Dominican immigrants have acquired Spanish nationality: close to 48 percent of Dominican immigrants were Spanish citizens in 2023, well above the average for the foreign population in Spain, whose naturalization rate was about 18 percent. Finally, Dominicans in Spain are highly concentrated geographically, with close to 60 percent residing in just two Autonomous Communities: The Community of Madrid (34 percent) and Catalonia (24.3 percent).

The labor force participation rate of Dominican immigrants is comparatively high not only when compared to the overall population in Spain but also to the rest of the foreign-born population residing in the country. However, Dominican workers suffer considerably higher unemployment than the overall workforce in Spain. In 2021, the unemployment rate among Dominicans aged 16 and over was 28.8 percent compared to 17 percent in Spain overall. This gap in the unemployment rate has been maintained over time, but it became abysmally large when the Spanish economy was going through the economic and financial crisis of 2008-2014. In 2011, the unemployment rate for Dominicans was 49.3 percent compared to 29.6 percent in Spain.

The higher unemployment rates among Dominicans may reflect the fact that both the economic crisis of the early 2010s and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 disproportionately affected service activities and the construction industry, sectors where Dominican workers are concentrated. In 2021, 63.8 percent of Dominicans worked in service sector occupations – particularly in hospitality establishments and in service activities offered to households– while the corresponding figure for the population in Spain overall was approximately half. The concentration of workers in the service sector is even higher among women: 82.4 per cent of Dominican women worked in service activities compared to 46 per cent among female workers in Spain overall. Among Dominican men, services as well as construction, manufacturing and wholesale trade represent important sources of employment.

Our estimates indicate that Dominican workers receive considerably lower wages than workers in Spain as a whole. We estimate that the average annual gross salary of Dominican immigrant workers in 2021 was €15,653, compared to €25,896 for workers in Spain overall. This represents a wide wage gap: it means the average salary of Dominican immigrant workers was 60.4 percent of the one prevailing among workers in Spain overall. There is also a wide gender wage gap among Dominican workers, a gap that applies to the overall workforce in Spain as well. Among Dominican immigrant workers, the average annual gross salary for men in 2021 was €17,729, compared to women's, which was €13,862. Dominican women thus earned approximately 78 percent of the average salary of men.

Dominican immigrants have an average level of schooling considerably lower than that of the overall population in Spain. More specifically, the percentage of Dominican immigrants aged 25 or older who had attained a higher education level (tertiary education) was 17.2 percent in 2021, compared to 29.5 percent in Spain. And although the average educational attainment of Dominican immigrants in Spain is increasing, it is doing so very slowly: the percentage of Dominicans aged 25 or over who had attained higher education increased by only two percentage points between 2011 and 2021, compared to an increase of nine percentage points among the general population in Spain.

Lifting the average educational attainment of the Dominican immigrant population remains a major challenge. Our analysis of the school/university enrollment of young Dominican immigrants is not encouraging. In 2021, the percentage of Dominicans immigrants aged 15 to 19 who were enrolled full-time in a school or university was 56.8 percent, compared to 82.2 percent for Spain overall. Among Dominican immigrants aged 20 to 24, only 8.8 percent had as their only activity being enrolled in a school or university, while the corresponding percentage for Spain was 31.7 percent. And this indicator has increased only slowly. Among Dominicans aged 20 to 24, the percentage whose only activity was being in a school or university barely rose, from 8.0 to 8.8 percent between 2011 and 2021, compared to an increase from 25.4 to 31.7 percent for the corresponding age group in Spain overall.

The profile that we have presented of the Dominican immigrant population in Spain is worrying. The high unemployment rate, the concentration of employment in occupations with relatively few opportunities for upward economic mobility, the comparatively low wages, and the relatively lower proportion that has attained or is enrolled in higher education, even among the young population, suggest the presence of serious socioeconomic challenges. This is worsened by the rapid increase in the cost of living, particularly housing, in the large urban areas of Spain, where most Dominicans reside. The outcome is greater poverty. The results of the Survey of Living Conditions in Spain indicate a higher risk of poverty among persons with foreign nationality, those with a lower level of schooling, and for the unemployed, among other categories. Since most Dominicans fall into these categories, our estimate is that close to 40 percent of the Dominican population in 2021 was at risk of poverty, compared to 17.3 percent for the overall population of Spain.

Despite the sobering picture of the socioeconomic status of Dominican immigrants in Spain, there are some reasons for optimism. Immigrants make great sacrifices --often under difficult social, economic and even political challenges-- to offer greater opportunities for their children. And this appears to be happening among Dominicans in Spain. This report has offered for the first time a detailed profile of Dominicans born in Spain. It is a very young population, but it shows great promise in terms of their enrollment in schools and universities.

The Dominican population born in Spain consists of persons born in Spain who have one or both parents born in the Dominican Republic. This population has increased rapidly: we estimate that it has grown from just 5 thousand in 2001 to 68,194 in 2024. It is composed largely of children and youth: 95 percent of the Dominican population born in Spain was under 25 years of age in 2024.

The school and university enrollment of Dominicans born in Spain is substantially greater than that for Dominican immigrants in the same age group. In 2021, the percentage of Dominicans born in Spain aged 15 to 19 whose only activity was to attend secondary or higher education institutions was 77.8 percent, much higher than the 56.8 percent among those born in the Dominican Republic. For Dominicans between the ages of 20 and 24 born in Spain, the percentage whose only activity was enrollment in a school or university was 24.7 percent in 2021, nearly three times higher than the 8.8 percent for those born in the Dominican Republic. These figures are all lower than the corresponding ones for the youth population of Spain overall, but the gap is much narrower for Dominicans born in Spain.

There is also a substantial difference based on gender: young females have greater enrollment in schools and universities than males. Among Dominicans born in Spain aged 15 to 19 in 2021, the percentage whose only activity was attending a school or university was 80.2 percent for females, while it represented 75.4 percent for males. Among the 20 to 24 age group, 26.6 percent of Dominican women born in Spain were enrolled full-time in a school or university, while for men it was 23.1 percent. These figures are all again much higher than those corresponding to Dominican immigrants in the same age group, although they do fall short of those prevailing among the overall youth population of Spain.

The results presented in this research report suggest several priority areas in terms of public policy interventions.

First, the high unemployment rates prevailing among Dominicans amid a labor shortage in various sectors of the Spanish economy (especially sectors in which Dominican workers are actively seeking employment, such as services and construction) indicates a serious distortion in the Spanish labor market, an imbalance that requires immediate attention.⁴⁵

The high proportion of women among the Dominican population, together with the widespread evidence of occupational segregation and gender wage gaps (despite women having on average higher educational

⁴⁵ The long-term, structural and frictional problems facing Spain's labor market are well-known and has led to several significant labor reforms as well as proposals for additional changes (see the detailed discussion in García Brosa and Sanromá (2023).

attainment than men) suggest the need for public policies that promote greater employment and pay equity between men and women. More specifically, given the high percentage of Dominican women employed in domestic or household services, which are often part-time, insecure, and based on verbal contracts, the formalization and professionalization of this profession may promote more equity with other occupations, allowing greater access to social security and other benefits. Spain's Law 16/2022, which came into force in September 9, 2022, whose objective is precisely to "equalize the working and social security conditions of household domestic workers with those of other self-employed workers," as well as its recent expansion in Royal Decree 893/2004 of September 10, 2024, can be of great help in improving working conditions in this sector.

Another area that stands out in terms of public policy priorities is the greater integration of immigrants into the microenterprise sector. Dominicans have a lower rate of self-employment than the overall population in Spain. In 2021, only 9.6 percent of Dominican men and 6.7 percent of Dominican women were self-employed compared to 17.5 percent and 11.3 percent, respectively, among the overall population in Spain. In other nations that receive Dominican immigrants, such as Puerto Rico, the rates of self-employment among Dominicans are much higher, even higher than those prevailing among the local population.⁴⁶ One of the critical elements for participation and success in this sector of the economy is access to finance, and it is here where the Dominican entrepreneur and small business encounters the greatest difficulties (due to the lack of collateral, the absence of references, etc.). Providing greater access to microcredit financial institutions, particularly among immigrants, could facilitate their financing and promote self-employment, stimulating the creation of successful small businesses among Dominicans in Spain.⁴⁷

The comparatively low educational attainment of Dominican immigrants is one of the greatest challenges. For adults, the focus should be on adult education programs – both at the secondary and tertiary levels. For youth, the greater grade repetition rates, higher school dropout rates, lower academic achievement, and the precarious transition from secondary to tertiary education are key issues. These are not exclusive to Spain since a particular focus on the immigrant student experience is required in most host nations, through programs that increase enrollment in preschool education,⁴⁸ foster greater retention in primary and secondary education, and, finally, encourage the transition to higher education.⁴⁹

This report has presented a detailed analysis of the demographic, educational and socioeconomic profile of the Dominican population in Spain. One next step is to produce a comparative analysis of Dominicans with other immigrant communities in Spain. In addition, the emphasis of this study was on the statistical analysis of data available through Spain's large databases. It would be important to complement this approach with anthropological and sociological studies of Dominican communities and their evolution over time. This would help document, on a more personal, micro level, the difficulties and challenges they face, as well as their successes and achievements. We hope that our research will contribute to stimulate the analysis of the Dominican diaspora in Spain.

⁴⁶ See Hernández, Rivera-Batiz, and Sisay (2023).

⁴⁷ Lacalle Calderón et. al. (2006).

⁴⁸ Second-cycle preschool education – from 3 to 6 years old – is free in Spain and offered as an alternative in public sector centers or institutions. But for kindergartens --from 0 to 3 years old-- access to daycare is not free and their availability is more complicated and expensive for low-income households. Investments in early childhood education are essential as a policy since research shows it has an enormous impact on a child's educational and emotional development; see, for example, García, Heckman, Ermini Leaf, and Prados (2020).

⁴⁹ See, for example, the strategies discussed in Portes, Aparicio, and Haller (2009, 2018) and Orozco et. al. (2008), among others.

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